

## Gibeon's Fleece – Joshua 9:3-27

### I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. This evening in our on-going study of practical faith, we are going to look at **Judges 6** & **Gideon's** fleece.
1. It should be a lesson about the clash between faith & unbelief, with the winner being a very weak faith.
    - a. Gideon was unsure about the will of the Lord, so he asked God to alternately drench, and then dry, one of his sheepskins.
    - b. The Lord willing, that message will be about **Gideons'** Fleece, Gideon's Foil and Gideon's Faith.
  2. In an effort to confuse the inattentive, I've entitled this morning's message "**Gibeon's Fleece.**"
  3. Here in **Joshua 9**, we have another battle between faith and unbelief.
    - a. And once again the winner is the a weak faith – the weak faith of the people of Gibeon.
    - b. That community sent ambassadors to Joshua with the fleece of peace, and the Lord covered it.
- B. Gibeon was one of the larger cities of the Hivites, a branch of the Canaanite nation.
1. It was about 6 or 8 miles south of Ai and Bethel, and about the same distance north of Jerusalem.
  2. Gibeon was a royal city, a capital city, an important and influential city.
    - a. It was the center of a little community of cities, maybe like today's bedroom communities.
    - b. There were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.
  3. And they didn't seem to be governed by a king, but rather by elders or some sort of senate.
    - a. In other words, what Gibeon did in this chapter probably reflected the democratic will of its citizens.
    - b. There was not some despotic, cowardly king making slaves of his subjects.
    - c. This is an important point, and needs to be kept in mind: we see the will of all the people.
- C. What I would like to do this morning is to use Gibeon as an another illustration of a sinner's salvation.
1. This time it is an illustration only. It is not as concise as last week's look at Rahab.
    - a. These people were not clearly and actually redeemed from their sin by the grace of Christ.
    - b. In other words, I'm not saying that every man, woman and child in these cities are in Heaven today.
    - c. But I would like to believe that some of them are, along with many of their descendants.
  2. Salvation from sin involves a personal relationship with the Lord – it is not family or community matter.
    - a. Just because your parents are Christians doesn't mean that you are a Christian.
    - b. Just because you live in a nation that claims to be Christian, doesn't mean that you are a Christian.
    - c. And just because you are a member of a sound, Bible-believing church of the Lord Jesus Christ, that does not mean you are a child of God – a Christian.
  3. The question is: have you in humble repentance, personally come to Christ Jesus, trusting in Him as your Lord and Saviour?
- D. I'd like to consider what Gibeon **KNEW**, what she **WANTED**, what she **DID**, and what she **RECEIVED**.
1. In many, many ways this will parallel what we saw in Rahab the Harlot.
  2. But we aren't surprised with that, because by nature we are all equally sinners.
  3. And the Lord is the same Saviour whether we be Canaanites or Canadians, Judeans or Jerichoans.
  4. Essentially, everyone who is saved is saved in the same way but with variations in the minor details.

### II. Let's think, first of all, about what the Gideonites **KNEW**. They knew a few things about **Jehovah**.

- A. For example, they knew what Joshua had done to Jericho and more recently to the community of Ai.
1. And if they knew the details, they also knew that these victories were not simple military victories.
    - a. These were miraculous events from the hand of the omnipotent God.
  2. So these people knew that the God of Israel was bigger and stronger than themselves.
    - a. They knew about the disintegrating walls of Jericho & the 7 day non-battle which took place there.
    - b. They said that they knew about Sihon & Og, the kings of the Amorites on the other side of Jordan.
    - c. Those men mounted military attacks upon Israel in the days when God's people were inexperienced in the business of war, and God brought down His enemies.

- d. In **verse 10**, the Gibeonites expressly stated that it was God who defeated those nations.
  - e. If they knew about the Amorites and Jericho, they undoubtedly heard about the crossing of Jordan.
  - f. And if the Jerichoans knew about the Red Sea and the ten plagues in Egypt, we might assume that these people also knew that this, too, came from the hand of Jehovah.
3. So these people **knew**, and **believed** what they had heard about the Lord.
  4. They **heard** and **believed**, but there is a difference in that & actually **trusting** & **worshipping** that God.
  5. Having said all that, I think it is interesting to note that the ambassadors didn't mention Jericho and Ai.
    - a. To maintain their lie, it was important not to mention any of the more-recent events.
    - b. They wanted to leave the impression they had left their homeland long before the fall of Jericho.
- B. So these people knew important things about the Lord, and they knew important things about themselves.
1. For example, they knew that they were in the gunsights of Jehovah.
  2. This is true of all sinners, even sinful, American, professing Christians.
  3. They **realized** that the Lord considered them to be aliens and rebels against Him.
  4. They might not have been able to define the word "**sin**" in Biblical terms, but they knew in their hearts that they were sinners.
- C. I think that probably the Canaanites had spies watching and over-hearing the events which took place at Mt. Ebal, in the previous chapter.
1. Verse one of our chapter seems to imply that some of these events came as a direct result of Ebal, as well as the recent Canaanite defeat at Ai.
  2. And assuming that the Gibeonites had heard the blessings and curses of God, they probably also heard of His condemnation of idolatry and idolaters.
  3. In other words, perhaps they heard Joshua quote Moses from **Deuteronomy 7**:
    - a. *"When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;*
    - b. *And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:*
    - c. *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.*
    - d. *For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.*
    - e. *But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.*
    - f. *For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."*
- D. The sinners of Gibeon knew that they were doomed if they remained in their current spiritual condition.
1. **Verse 24** – *"And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing."*
  2. The sinners of Gibeon knew that they were doomed, if they remained where they were spiritually.
  3. In this they were no different from our neighbors today, and where we have all been.
    - a. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*
    - b. *"There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not."*

- c. *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*
- (1) *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*
  - (2) *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*
  - (3) *Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:*
  - (4) *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood:*
  - (5) *Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known:*
  - (6) *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

4. The truth of the matter is: for the sinner there is no hope whatsoever.
    - a. There is no righteousness in any of us to overcome the wickedness of our hearts.
    - b. There are no acts of goodness or religiousness that can please the Lord – until we have new hearts. We are doomed.
  5. And the people of Gibeon were blessed of God sufficiently to realize it.
- E. In this chapter there is a comparison of two different peoples: Gibeon and the rest of Canaan.
1. The vast majority of the Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites took counsel together in order to attack and drive back the interloping Israelites.
  2. But then there were the Gibeonites.
  3. Why was their response different from the rest of their neighbors and kin?
  4. I’m sure that the world of social media would answer differently, but I believe that Gibeon responded as they did because of the grace of God.
  5. The Lord had given them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.
  6. These people had been chosen of God to become His servants. But they didn’t know how to begin.
- F. It is interesting to think about the things that Gibeon knew.

### III. But what was it that Gibeon WANTED?

- A. *“We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us” (verse 6).*
1. That means that they wanted a peace treaty with Israel and with her God.
    - a. They made no demands or stipulations whatsoever.
    - b. Their whole demeanor and language implied a complete surrender to Israel’s demands.
  - c. *“And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.”*
  2. We aren’t told whether this was supposed to be an offensive or defensive treaty, so I assume both.
    - a. It wasn’t just that they wanted Israel to promise not to attack or destroy them.
    - b. It also included a clause that if Gibeon was attacked by others that Israel would come to her aid.
    - c. And that was in fact what happened in the next chapter.
  3. In fact, this peace treaty was a key ingredient in the subjugation of Canaan, by bringing together a number of other cities and tribes to punish Gibeon for her relationship to Israel.
- B. In verses 8 and 9 the Gibeonite ambassadors declare themselves to be *“servants to Israel.”*
1. It might be argued that this was just polite or even political language, but I’m not so sure.
  2. When lawyers are negotiating a complicated agreement, the words used have to be precise.
  3. I believe that these Gibeonites were declaring themselves willing to be actual servants to Israel.
  4. And later when they did become hewers of wood and drawers of water – servants to Israel’s Levites, they didn’t voice a peep of protest. They got for what they asked.
  5. They really meant themselves to be servants, if that is what Israel and Jehovah demanded.
  6. *“We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us” – verse 11.*

- C. This Gibeonite attitude is probably the single most important missing link in modern evangelism.
1. Much of the corrupt 21<sup>st</sup> century evangelism permits the sinner to come to God on that sinner's terms.
    - a. It allows the Canaanite to remain a Canaanite while bowing twice a year to the God of Israel.
    - b. The current evangelistic attitude is that it is not necessary to be a new creature in Christ – you can be an old creature with a new eternal future.
    - c. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we're going to Heaven simply because we've insincerely asked Jesus to come into our hearts.
  2. That is not the evangelism, or the salvation, we find in the Word of God.
    - a. The true Gospel doesn't cease to be good news simply because it demands sorrowful repentance for sin.
    - b. The good news doesn't cease to be the gospel simply because it puts God before the sinner.
  3. And the Gospel doesn't cease to be good when it demands that the saved become the Lord's servants.
  4. Scripture says, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*
    - a. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*
    - b. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*
- D. It might be argued that all Gibeon wanted was to save their idolatrous necks.
1. They were willing to say and do anything to escape destruction.
  2. I agree that they wanted to save themselves.
  3. That is the natural response to what they had learned about God and the pronouncement of their condemnation. But I don't believe that they wanted to save their *"idolatrous"* necks.
  4. They were showing repentance and a willingness to sacrifice their idolatry to become God's servants.
- E. Over the centuries, people have come to the Lord through various means:
1. There have been people won to Christ by learning about His love and His sufferings.
  2. And there have been people brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord by studying what Christ had done in the lives of other sinners.
  3. There have been many reasons and tools that the Lord has used.
  4. And certainly not the least of them has been fear of judgment and Hell.
  5. Scripture says that even Noah was moved by fear to the building of the ark.
  6. The **reason** for coming to Christ is not nearly as important as **the actual coming** to Christ.

#### IV. With that in mind, let's consider what Gibeon DID.

- A. The city of Gibeon and her neighbors came to the Lord in the only way that they knew how.
1. I make no excuses for their deception.
  2. Their lies about coming from a far off nation cannot be condoned or encouraged in the least little bit.
  3. God abhors lying and deception.
    - a. *"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape."* – **Prov. 19:5.**
    - b. And *"the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* – **Revelation 21:8.**
  4. But the people of Gibeon had not yet learned these things.
  5. The truth is: that little white lie that you uttered the other day is infinitely more wicked than this whopper of a lie that is fostered and flouted here in **Joshua 9.**
  6. The difference is that you know God hates lies, and those people had yet to learn that fact.

- B. Essentially, what Gibeon did was to come to God, despite the lie they uttered in their coming.
1. They threw themselves at the feet of Israel and the Lord.
  2. They separated themselves from the rest of their idolatrous kinfolk.
  3. They gave evidence of a little, tiny, infinitesimal, microscopic faith, hoping for deliverance.
  4. Sure, they didn't deserve to be spared the destruction that was going to fall on Canaan.
  5. Sure, they didn't display great faith and a well-rounded Bible-based theology.
  6. But then neither did Gideon when he laid out the fleece for the Lord to do the dew.
  7. And neither did most of you, for that matter, when you first came to Christ.
- C. Gibeon came to the Lord as best they knew how, but it involved absolute surrender.

#### V. And what was it that Gibeon RECEIVED?

- A. They received their desired peace treaty.
1. They were saved from the conflagration, the fire storm, that was beginning to sweep across Canaan.
  2. **Verse 15** – *“And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.”* That was based on the uninvestigated lie.
  3. After the deception had been exposed, and when many in Israel were furious with their leaders for making the treaty, Joshua and the elders declared the league valid.
    - a. *“But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.*
    - b. *This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.*
    - c. *“And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not”* – **verse 26.**
- B. What the vast majority of the world does not realize is that God is at war with them.
1. They are rebels, and Jehovah treats His rebels as they deserve to be treated.
  2. What a blessing it was to the people of Gibeon to come to that realization.
  3. Among the many things that sinners need is a peaceful reconciliation with this holy God.
  4. And that is one of the results of the great work of the Saviour.
  5. Gibeon got their peace treaty.
- C. A second result in the case of these people was the opportunity and privilege to become servants of God.
1. Most of the shallow, foolish Israelites believed that when they made the Gibeonites slaves, they were assigning them to a horrible fate, a fate worse than death, a living death.
  2. Wisely, Israel's leadership didn't consign the Gibeonites to become the personal servants of those Israelite princes.
    - a. Without a doubt that **would** really have been a fate worse than death.
    - b. The Gibeonites would sooner or later have been treated most despicably.
    - c. But that was not to be.
  3. We are not told how Joshua came to this conclusion, but I would guess that he learned his lesson about **not** consulting the Lord.
  4. I think that this sentence of slavery was proscribed by God Himself.
- D. The people of Gibeon, their wives, children, and grandchildren to the tenth and nth generation were ordained to become **“Nethinim”** – temple and tabernacle servants.
1. They would work directly with the Levites, and indirectly with the priests.
  2. They would take carts, donkeys or whatever was needed to travel out into the country-side to collect wood for the various fires used in the worship of the Lord.

3. Others of their number had the responsibility of supplying all the water for use in the brazen laver and other basins in the Tabernacle.
  4. Perhaps some were given the dirty utensils of the Tabernacle to be washed in the water warmed over the burning wood that had been gathered by their brethren.
  5. And for their service, these Gibeonites were rewarded with their room and board.
  6. But not only that, they were constantly exposed to the Word of God and the Gospel.
    - a. They heard and saw all the things about the tabernacle – things which pictured the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - b. There are few things in this world more blessed than that.
    - c. There are few blessings greater than Christian parents & exposure to a church of the Lord Jesus.
- E. A fate worse than death you say?
1. These poor people began to associate with the best and most righteous people in the land of Israel.
  2. They rubbed elbows with priests, and prophets, and with the most devout of the more common people.
  3. They had the privilege of directly serving the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
  4. David once said, Lord, *“a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*
  5. These Gibeonites had a job somewhat like David’s doorkeepers.
- F. What an ultimate blessing this supposed *“curse”* was to these converted Canaanites.
1. And these people didn’t just disappear into the pages of history.
  2. Like their cousin Rahab, they keep coming up in the Word of God, as faithful servants of the Lord.
  3. What began as a situation of deception and shame, ended up in the glorious salvation of a great many of their family.
  4. Would that were true of all of **our** families.
  5. In some ways it was better to be a Gibeonite than a full-blooded Israelite.
- G. Remember that you and I were not physically born into the family of God.
1. We are Canaanites by nature and worthy of eternal extermination.
  2. But God has graciously invited **us** to join Him in the great work of His exultation.
  3. We, who are unworthy of spit, have been invited to join the Lord in His Holy Temple.
    - a. But, only if we come humbly through the doorway of salvation.
    - b. Only if we come through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - c. There still must be a sacrifice made for our sin. That sacrifice was made in the death of Christ.
  4. As sinners, we still must come to God through the Christ of Calvary.
- H. Oh wicked Canaanite, have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power, are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
1. Why not? Why not? What excuse do you have?
  2. You cannot justify your on-going rebellion.
  3. Surrender to Jesus. Put your trust for reconciliation with God in Him.