



*Gibeon*  
*Joshua 9*

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## Joshua 9: Introduction

Another significant victory under their belt, and Joshua and the rulers of Israel are feeling pretty good about themselves.

A little too good, as it turned out.

The deception of the Gibeonites revealed an ongoing problem among the leaders of Israel: At crucial moments, they failed to consult the Lord, trusting instead in their own wits. This is a chronic problem and will remain so throughout the Old Testament as a reminder that, unless God does something different for His people, they will never realize the full blessings of His covenant and rule.

Important lessons lie ahead for us in Joshua 9. Let's make sure we seek the Lord to teach and guide us according to His good pleasure.

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## 1 The Canaanites Prepare

*And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard about it, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord. But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. And 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.”* Joshua 9.1-6

*Reflect.*

1. Laying hold on the promises of God is not an easy road. There are obstacles, and the enemy of our souls will resist our progress. What obstacles and forms of resistance do you typically encounter as you press on to claim God’s promises?
2. How important is it that we understand the various obstacles and forms of resistance that we can expect? How can understanding this help us in our daily preparations?

*Think about it.*

Israel achieved two smashing victories at the beginning of their campaign to conquer the land of promise. Naturally, the rest of the peoples in Canaan would hear about this. Then they would have to decide what to do: fight the Israelites as separate nations or come up with something better?

They chose the latter course, entering into a league to stand against “Joshua and Israel with one accord.” As we shall see, the Canaanites were not very good at working together, for not even uniting their forces could prevent their inevitable defeat.

The Gibeonites must have sensed as much (they knew themselves and their neighbors well). They decided that this league-thing wasn’t going to work, so they decided on another tack. If a little deception could work for Israel, perhaps a little deception could work for them as well. They “worked craftily” and presented themselves to Joshua at Gilgal as emissaries “from a far country” – definitely not Canaanites. As we shall see, they presented themselves as *servants*. And such they would become, according to their word.

As it worked out, like the shrewd steward whom Jesus commended (Lk. 16.1-8), the Gibeonites would earn a reprieve from God for their shrewdness.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What kinds of resistance can we expect to meet as we seek the Kingdom and glory of God, and work to lay hold on His promises? How can we prepare to deal with this resistance?
2. Deception is one of the key tactics of the devil. If he can deceive us – like Adam and Eve, and like Joshua and Israel – he can derail us from obeying the Word of God. Can we recognize when we are being deceived, apart from a growing understanding of Scripture? Explain.
3. Suppose you had been at Gilgal when the Gibeonites showed up. What would you have suggested to Joshua between verses 6 and 7? How does this apply to your own pursuit of the promises of God?

*“For the kings of the earth have assembled together, the senate and the people and the leaders of Rome, to blot out the name of*

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*Jesus and Israel at the same time. For they have decreed in their laws that there be no Christians. Every city, every class, attacks the name of Christians. But just as at that time all those kings assembling against Jesus [Joshua] were able to do nothing, so even now, whether princes or those opposing authorities, they have been able to do nothing to prevent the race of Christians from being propagated more widely and profusely.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*I know, Lord, that the devil and the world want to keep me from laying hold on Your promises. Help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 25.*

Only God can teach, lead, and empower us to learn His way and walk in His covenant. Let this psalm guide you in seeking Him more fervently.

**Psalm 25** (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

I lift my soul to You; O Lord, in You I trust.

Let me not come to shame, nor let my foes o'er me exult.

All they who wait on You shall never come to shame;  
Yet they to shame shall come who stand against Your holy Name.

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!  
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!  
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;  
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;  
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;  
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

For Your sake, Lord, forgive. All they who fear You, Lord,  
Shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;  
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.  
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

Consider all my foes, who hate me all the day;  
And rescue my poor soul lest I should stumble in the way.

Preserve me in Your way, redeem Your people, Lord!  
We wait for You and refuge seek in Your own faithful Word.

## 2 Misdirected Questions

*Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?" But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"* Joshua 9.7, 8

*Reflect.*

1. The men of Israel were rightly wary of the Hivites. Why?
2. Joshua steps in to get to the bottom of the mystery of who these people are. What is missing from his inquiry here?

*Think about it.*

The men of Israel were on the right track. They wanted to find out who these people were, and whom they represented. They understood that they could not "make a covenant" with any of the Canaanite peoples of the land.

The Gibeonites (Hivites) responded only by saying they had come as the servants of Israel. That was clearly less than forthcoming, but it deflected the sharp edge of the question of the men of Israel.

Joshua is not helpful. He is direct, but his question invites the carefully rehearsed answer of the Gibeonites, which we will consider in our next installment. Joshua did not think to seek the Lord about this matter. Or if he did, he chose not to do so (v. 14). He has not learned from the mistake at Ai.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What did it mean for Israel to "make a covenant" with another nation? What are the distinguishing features of a covenant relationship? Do we still enter into such relationships today? Explain.
2. Self-reliance is the enemy of faith. Fresh off their victory at Ai and Bethel, Joshua is brimming again with self-confidence. He can figure this situation out without recourse to God. How can we know when self-reliance is beginning to guide our choices and decisions? What should we do then?
3. Joshua and Israel were easily deceived, but they set themselves up for it. Explain.

*"Here, however, a question arises; as the Israelites object that they are not at liberty to make any paction with the nations of Canaan, but are bound to exterminate them utterly. There is certainly a discrepancy between the two things — to exhort to submission, and at the same time refuse to admit suppliants and volunteers. But although God required that the laws of war should be observed according to use and wont, and that, therefore, peace should be offered on condition of submitting, he merely wished to try the minds of those nations, that they might bring destruction upon themselves by their own obstinacy." John Calvin, Commentary on Joshua (1509-1564)*

*Lord, the great deceiver is always seeking to turn us from the path of righteousness. Help me to stay in communion with You, O Lord, so that...*

*Pray Psalm 5.*

This psalm reminds us that deceivers, liars, and truth-stretchers can turn us from devotion to the Lord. As you pray, think of all the ways you might have to confront deception in the day ahead, and commit yourself afresh to the Lord.

**Psalm 5** (*Angel's Story: O Jesus, I Have Promised*)

O Lord, attend and hear me, consider how I groan.  
Receive my cries and near be, and love me as Your own.  
By morning, Lord I seek You, for You will hear my voice;  
My every need You speak to, and make my soul rejoice!

In sin You take no pleasure; no evil dwells with You.  
Vain boasts You will not treasure, nor those who boasting do.  
Sin kindles Your hot anger, You crush all those who lie;  
The violent live in danger of Your all-searching eye.

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.  
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!  
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.  
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

My foes would fain deceive me and crush me in the way;  
Their lying tongues would grieve me and lead my soul astray.  
Their guilt hangs on above them; their guile shall be their fall;  
They spurn the One Who loves them: reject them, one and all!

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter 'neath Your wing.  
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.  
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;  
Preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

### 3 Deception

*So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—to Sibon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, 'We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us.' This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey.'" Joshua 9.9-13*

*Reflect.*

1. These people went to considerable lengths to lie to Joshua. Why did they do that? Why do people lie, anyway?
2. Which part of this story do you suppose Joshua would have found most convincing? Why?

*Think about it.*

Are Joshua and the men of Israel feeling overconfident again? The Gibeonites spin their well-rehearsed narrative, which could not have been more artfully crafted. They begin by flattering the God of Israel. They had "heard of His fame" and all that. Not that they feared Him, mind you; they were just really impressed.

Then, notice the appeal to elders. They undoubtedly knew that Israel, like most peoples in those days, showed great respect to their elders, especially when they were supported by "all the inhabitants of our country." Maybe it's just me, but that bit of hyperbole would have got me to wondering, "Now how did they accomplish that?"

Then, what they must have hoped would be the *coup de grace*: "We are your servants." Who could fault that? The whole nation, giving itself over to serve us? Sounds like a pretty good deal.

But the Gibeonites go further. They insist that Israel "make a covenant" with them. Covenant-making was a formal process of entering into a pact of mutual support, defense, and benefit. In those days, parties in a covenant were bound to one another in perpetuity, and this is precisely what the Gibeonites were seeking, and what God had forbidden His people to do with any of the people of Canaan.

The moldy bread, worn out clothing, and empty and torn wine skins were just icing on the cake. A nice touch to seal the deal, but only window-dressing. The flattery and offer of servitude were all Joshua needed to hear.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Flattery, seniority, majority, and personal advantage: The devil uses all these tactics to draw us off the path God has chosen for us. Can you give some examples? For example, "Yeah, well *most* people think it's OK to..."
2. If you had been Joshua, what follow-up questions might you have asked the Gibeonites, having heard their story?
3. How might Joshua and the men of Israel have kept from falling into this trap?

*"Then the Gibeonites, fearing his strong hand, came with guile, pretending that they were from a land very far away, and by*

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*traveling so long had rent their shoes and worn out their clothing, of which they showed proofs that it was growing old. They said, too, that their reason for undergoing so much labor was their desire to obtain peace and to form friendship with the Hebrews, and [they] began to ask Joshua to form an alliance with them. And he, being as yet ignorant of localities and not knowing anything of the inhabitants, did not see through their deceit, nor did he enquire of God but readily believed them.” Ambrose of Milan (333-397 AD)*

*Lord, I know that deception and flattery are the devil's tools to lead me away from following You. Help me to be alert to these, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 12.*

What lies, deceit, or flattery do you expect to encounter today? Take shelter in the Word and promises of God, and keep in communication with Him through prayer.

**Psalm 12** (*Hamburg: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be; they who believe in Christ are few.  
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Stop, Lord, the lips that utter lies, all those who speak with boasting tongue!  
See how Your holy Word they despise, while their own praises they have sung.

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.  
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv'rance, peace, and rest.

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined;  
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

Proudly the wicked strut and stand; Your indignation builds on high;  
Men may exalt their wicked plans, but You will judge them by and by.

## 4 Deceived

*Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them. And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. Joshua 9.14-18*

*Reflect.*

1. Verse 14 is ominous. What does it suggest?
2. What was the effect of this debacle on Joshua and the other rulers of Israel?

*Think about it.*

My late father, upon coming to the realization of some mistake he'd made in a calculation, could be heard muttering an old proverb to himself, "Too soon old, too late smart." He'd missed a detail somewhere along the line, and when he finally saw his error, he would rebuke himself as a way of saying, "Don't make that mistake again."

Joshua was getting older now, but sometimes he doesn't appear to be getting any smarter. How could he have failed to "ask counsel of the LORD" in this situation? It's easy for us to fault him, but we do the same thing. Every day we get a little older, but are we getting any smarter? Do we seek the Lord, praying about everything, in everything giving thanks and praise to God, offering up all our time and work for His purposes and glory? Or do we stumble into snares, miasmas, debacles, and miscalculations because we have failed to seek the counsel of the Lord for every area of our lives?

It's not clear how Israel came to see the wool pulled over their eyes (v. 16). For three days the rulers undoubtedly congratulated themselves on their "victory" in making the Gibeonites their allies, passing around their confiscated provisions and thinking themselves very smart, indeed. How they must have been chagrined ("Don't blame me, it wasn't my idea!") when the Gibeonites' ruse became clear.

The people of Israel, riding high on their recent victories, were chomping at the bit to reduce the four cities of the Hivites to rubble and gather the spoils for themselves. But their rulers had to explain there would be no conquest here, because of what they had sworn to the Gibeonites. Consequently, the people took to grumbling and complaining about their rulers: "How can those old guys be so dumb?"

This does not bode well.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How would you counsel a new believer to "ask the counsel of the LORD" for his daily life? How do you practice this in your own life?
2. Church leaders must be careful to make all their decisions within the counsel of the Lord. What can happen when church leaders fail to do this? How can failing to ask the Lord's counsel affect the health of the local church and its mission?
3. Paul says that believers should do all things without complaining or grumbling (Phil. 2.14-16). Instead of

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grumbling at our “dumb leaders”, what should we do?

*“The chastisement of their levity by the discovery of the fraud, three days after, must, by the swiftness of the punishment, have made them more sensible of the shame and disgrace. For it was thus known, that through sloth and lethargy, they had very stupidly fallen into error from not having taken the trouble to inquire into a matter almost placed before their eyes.”* John Calvin, *Commentary on Joshua (1509-1564AD)*

*You command me to pray about everything, Lord, and I want to make sure I ask Your counsel concerning all things. To help in doing this, Lord, I will...*

*Pray Psalm 90.*

As you pray, remember that God is Your only secure dwelling-place. He sees you at all times, and He can guide you in all your time and all your work. Commit your work to Him for this day, and you'll be less likely to fall prey to the devil's deception and schemes.

**Psalm 90** (*Landas: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Lord, You have been our dwelling place from generations gone.  
Before the mountains came to be, before the earth was born,  
Before the worlds, and long before men on the earth first trod,  
From everlasting long ago, O God, You are our God!

You turn men back to dust and say, “Return from whence you came!”  
A thousand years are in Your sight like yesterday the same.  
You sweep away our lives with ease, like grass that sprouts and dies.  
Your wrath consumes us and we live dismayed amid our sighs.

You set our sins before Your face; our secret sins You know.  
Our days decline in fury as we sigh to see them go.  
And though we live for eighty years, yet hard and sad the time,  
For soon it goes when Your great wrath consumes us in our prime.

So teach us all our days to note that wisdom may be ours.  
Return, O Lord, have pity on those servants who are Yours.  
Each morning let Your love appear that we for joy may sing.  
And make us glad for every day You us affliction bring.

Now let Your work to us appear; our children show Your might.  
And let Your favor rest on us; show mercy in Your sight.  
The work that You have given us, confirm, and to us show,  
That we Your chosen path may walk and in Your precepts go.

## 5 Plan B

*Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them." And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them." Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell near us? Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God." Joshua 9.19-23*

*Reflect.*

1. To their credit, Joshua and the other leaders owned up to their mistake before the congregation. Why was that a good thing?
2. They also set forth a plan for rectifying this situation. Why was that a good idea? Is anything lacking in the response of Joshua and the leaders?

*Think about it.*

The leaders take the right step in admitting their mistake and trying to make the best of it. But I don't see any evidence of repentance for the larger sin, the sin of failing to consult the Lord. Their actions seem primarily concerned with quelling the unrest among the people of God. For His part, God appears content to let the leaders squirm a bit before finding a solution which, while it's Plan B, still has some merit.

The emissaries from Gibeon presented themselves as servants to the nation of Israel. Be careful what you wish for: Joshua granted their request, and that in perpetuity. The question of making people slaves arises at this point, but we will not pursue it. Suffice it to say that (1) slavery was a common practice among ancient peoples, usually as the result of war; (2) the plight of slaves in ancient lands was almost worse than being killed in battle; (3) God's Law allowed slavery, but with strict conditions that guarded the rights and wellbeing of the slave, including the right to own property, accumulate wealth, and purchase oneself or be purchased into freedom; and (4) to be a slave to the people of Israel was nothing like the horrible experience of chattel slavery perpetrated against Africans in the 17<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Slaves were considered property, but they were also treated as image-bearers of God. Thus, although it was standard practice in the ancient world, in the world where Christ's Kingdom is coming as in heaven, slavery has no place. The New Testament laid the foundation for the elimination of slavery, and Christian peoples from the first century to the present – with some unhappy and notable exceptions – have labored to eradicate slavery wherever it exists, in all its varied forms.

Joshua looks a little feckless to me in verses 22 and 23. He tries to blame the Gibeonites for his having been deceived; but this could have been avoided had he sought the counsel of the Lord. Then he curses and condemns them to slavery as a kind of "Take that!" for their role in his embarrassment.

The leaders of God's people are not perfect. They never will be. They will always disappoint us in some ways. Our task is to learn from them as much as possible about what we should and should not do in leading others into the Kingdom and righteousness of God.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What can we learn from this situation about serving God in our daily lives?
2. It frequently seems like leaders are trying to placate the people rather than do the will of God. Do you agree? Explain.

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3. Just because God allowed slavery in ancient Israel doesn't mean that slavery is part of His good purpose and Kingdom. Explain.

*“Formerly Rahab the harlot, who believed with a sound faith with all her house and received the Israelite spies with fullest devotion, was received fully into the community and society of the people; and it is written of her that ‘she was attached to the sons of Israel until today.’ But those who did not so much love the community of the Israelite clan as they were terrified by fear of their destruction approached Jesus [Joshua] with cunning and fraud. How could they deserve the liberty of life and the community of the kingdom in their slavish deceits?” Origen of Alexandria (185-254AD)*

*Lord, when I was a slave to sin, You liberated me into Your Kingdom. And now I serve You, not as a slave, but...*

*Pray Psalm 51.14-19.*

Every act of confession must be accompanied by repentance and restoration. Listen for the Lord to convict your of sin, then confess, repent, and resolve on a different course of action.

**Psalm 51.14-19** (*He Leadeth Me*)

Deliver us, from guilt, O Lord, You Who have saved us by Your Word;  
And let our tongues Your mercy bless, and sing of Your great righteousness!  
*Refrain vv. 15, 18*

Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!  
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

No sacrifice, no offering would You have us, Your people, bring;  
But broken spirits, cleansed of lies, and pure hearts You will not despise.  
*Refrain*

Now build Your Church, raise high the wall of those who on Your mercy call.  
And take our lives and let them be sweet sacrifices, Lord, to Thee!

## 6 Grace to Fear and Be Saved

*So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your 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 very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us." So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day. Joshua 9.24-27*

*Reflect.*

1. The Gibeonites frankly admit that they feared God and Israel. Is there anything laudable in this?
2. What role should the fear of God play in the life of faith?

*Think about it.*

To their credit, the Gibeonites feared God and Israel so much that they knew fighting against them would avail nothing. They took up the ruse in a desperate attempt to avert destruction. This was a work of God's grace, Who created in the Gibeonites an attitude of fear and a desire to be saved, when all around them peoples were readying for war against God and His people.

Even if it meant perpetual slavery, that would be better than being destroyed. By not taking up arms against Israel, and instead seeking shelter with and among them, the Gibeonites demonstrated a measure of faith or hope that no other Canaanite peoples would manifest. As we shall see, God showed them this grace to accomplish a greater good for His people, including, we may assume, the Gibeonites.

The Gibeonites were allowed to return to their homes, presumably, to ready themselves and their people for service to Israel. Their lives would continue much as before, except that now they would be at Israel's beck and call to be pressed into service as woodcutters and water carriers whenever needed. Here is another signal in the book of Joshua of God's intention to extend saving grace to the Gentiles.

It's not the arrangement God intended for His people. But in this life, God's rule and covenant are only ever partially and imperfectly realized. We continue to struggle against the law of sin within us, and try to obey God and trust Him completely. And thus, like Joshua, we make compromises and errors in judgment, which we then have to deal with before we move on. Where confession of sin and repentance are sincere, God's grace will cover a multitude of transgressions, and make it possible for us to continue increasing in His promises, despite our failures of faith and obedience.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Does God work in the hearts of unbelievers today like He did with the Gibeonites? How should this encourage us in working our Personal Mission Field?
2. In a very real sense, we're all Gibeonites. Explain.
3. Review Genesis 12.1-3. How can you see that the sparing of the Gibeonites is consistent with the larger promises of God?

*"They themselves say, 'We have heard how many things the Lord did for you' through the midst of the Red Sea and in the desert. And although they said these things and confessed that they had both heard and known of the divine miracles, yet they produced*

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*nothing worthy in faith, nothing in admiration of such great powers. And therefore Jesus [Joshua], when he sees the narrowness and smallness displayed in their faith, preserves a very just moderation towards them, so that they might merit salvation.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*None of us deserves to be saved, Lord, and we are all your “water carriers and woodcutters.” Thank You for Your grace and mercy. Show me today how I may...*

*Pray Psalm 115.*

Thank God for His mercy and grace. Trust in Him for the day ahead, and call upon Him to bless and keep you as you live, not for your own glory, but for His.

**Psalm 115** (*Plainfield: Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"  
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Idols made by men's own hand – ever to Your Name be glory –  
See nor hear nor understand – ever to Your Name be glory!  
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;  
All those who serve them fall, but unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory –  
Find in Him their help and shield: Ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –  
Will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,  
All who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore  
And bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

## 7 The Gibeonites

*Read Joshua 9.*

*Reflect.*

1. What was the difference between the response of the Gibeonites to Israel's initial victories and that of the rest of the nations of Canaan? How can we account for this?
2. Joshua and the rulers of Israel failed to consult the Lord in this matter. But did their failure thwart the Lord's purposes?

*Think about it.*

In many ways, the Gibeonites are a study in how some people come to salvation. Let's have a closer look.

First, there is an awareness of the greatness of God, and of the reality of His working in time, in people, and with frightful power. All people know God, as Paul explained (Rom. 1.18ff), but not all people are willing to *admit* they know Him, and to *seek* Him as He intends (Acts 17.26, 27). Instead, they deny, resist, and fight against Him.

But as the grace of God works on them, their resistance breaks down, and they begin seeking some accommodation with Him. Under the influence of God's grace, second, the Gibeonites recognized the futility of fighting against Him. Their only hope was to ingratiate themselves with the people of God, and thus, if only by association, find deliverance from death. They adopted a ruse as their way, hopefully, of achieving their objective. Put into a more abstract perspective, the Gibeonites had to humble themselves and seek a new identity among those who served the God of Israel.

Finally, against all odds and in seeming contradiction to the mission of Israel, the Gibeonites were "adopted" into the household of God as servants of His people. Just so, when anyone comes to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, it is a miracle that eventuates in their becoming servants of God and members of the household of faith. That any sinner – deaf to God's call, blind to His truth, and dead in trespasses and sins – should come to faith in Jesus is a work that only the grace of God can accomplish; and He accomplishes it at His pleasure, by His grace, and through the agency of His witnesses, though they be ever so inept.

We have been mostly critical of the role of Joshua and the rulers of Israel in this episode. However, despite his failure to consult the Lord, Joshua foreshadows Jesus – and every witness to Jesus – by offering a covenant to the suppliant Gibeonites. This is what each believer does who extends the offer of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus to an unbelieving friend.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Think back on your own coming to faith: In what ways did it follow the course the Gibeonites took?
2. Meditate on Genesis 6.3. Does God's Spirit still "strive" with people today? What forms might that striving take? Is this something we should be praying for?
3. In the sovereignty of God, He can use even the ineptitude of believers and the duplicity of unbelievers to accomplish His good and perfect will. How should we be encouraged by this in working our Personal Mission Field?

*"Although they [the Gibeonites] had brought a little faith, nevertheless they did not receive the highest rank of the kingdom or of*

*Gibeon*  
*Joshua 9*

*freedom because their faith was not ennobled by the increase of works, since the apostle James declares, 'faith without works is dead.'"* Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)

*Thank You, Lord, that though I may not be the most courageous or consistent witness for Jesus, still I know that You can...*

*Pray Psalm 71.12-16.*

As you think about the day ahead, what opportunities for bearing witness to Christ can you anticipate? Use this prayer to help you prepare.

**Psalm 71.12-16, 3** (*Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*)

O God be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!

Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.

*Refrain, v. 3*

A Rock of habitation be;

Command Your Word to rescue me;

My Rock and Fortress ever be!

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!

With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

*Refrain*

*Gibeon*  
*Joshua 9*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Why is that we so often fail to consult the Lord about matters?
2. How can you see the sovereignty and grace of God at work in the story of the Gibeonites?
3. How does this story help us in understanding how people come to faith in Jesus?
4. Must we be flawless in our witness for God to use us in helping others come to Jesus? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Joshua 9? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

*Gibeon*  
*Joshua 9*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.