

The Prudence of the Gibeonites.

Joshua 9:1-15.

Sunday evening, February 21, 2010.

I. Opposite effects. (Vs. 1,2 and the remaining chapter.)

Chapter 9 opens up to us describing a contrast between all the kings in Canaan and the people of the city of Gibeon.

- A. The remaining kings in the land of Canaan, and there were many of them, upon hearing of the fall of Jericho and Ai, as well as the rapid advance of the Israelites into the interior toward Mt. Ebal and Mt Gerazim, call for a conference.
- B. It is decided at this conference that if they individually should oppose Israel, they would probably share the fate of Jericho and Ai. Therefore they will face Israel with a united front.
- C. All the past feuding and differences are put aside, and they band together as they must face a common enemy.
- D. At this time the contrast with the people of Gibeon is introduced in the words: "But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily..." Vs. 4.

Applications:

1. We see the effect that facing a common enemy had on the kingdom states of Canaan. They put their past differences aside, or at least on hold, so that they might band together to face a common, and formidable, enemy.
How often does the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ treat, and look upon, their brothers and sisters in the Lord as though they were the enemy. And we do so often over some of the finer points of doctrine and biblical understanding, or the lack thereof.
Should not our facing of our common enemy drive us into each other's arms; not necessarily forgetting our differences, but fully embracing one another for what we are, brothers and sisters in the Lord, who will share and live together in the Lord's house forevermore?
2. We see the effect that the presence of the people of God had on the people of Canaan. Most of them were hardened and resisted with renewed efforts. But the people of Gibeon were made sensible of their own plight and by humility as well as craftiness and deceit, sought to avoid a catastrophe.
The same presence and work of God hardened one and softened the other. The same sun softens wax, and hardens the clay.
What kind of heart do you have before the Lord. How do God's dealings with you, such as His chastening hand, affect you?

II. The prudence of the Gibeonites.

- A. The Gibeonites were sensible to their true danger.
 1. They knew that without decisive action on their part it was all over.
 2. They knew that they ought not to put their confidence in flesh and blood by forging an alliance with the other kings of the land.
 3. The Gibeonites choose to deal with Joshua and Israel (and thereby with

Israel's God) directly.

- B. The Gibeonites are apprehensive with regards to the mercy that may, or may not, be shown them upon an unconditional surrender on their part.
 - 1. That drives them to the practice of deceit. They pretend to be a people they are not. A people that lived far away, outside the boundaries of the promised land. Yet they lived right nearby.
 - 2. This uncertainty, about receiving mercy or not, also drives them to the place of humility. They are not looking to make a treaty with Israel as equals. They say at the end of vs. 11 "We are your servants; now therefore make a covenant with us." They aimed no higher than to be allowed to live as servants in the house, and among the people, of God.
- C. Finally the Gibeonites show themselves to be a people of faith, although in its infant stages and mixed with much fear and impurity.
 - 1. They confess that they have come to Joshua "because of the Name of the Lord your God." Vs. 9. They state their familiarity with the works of the Lord in Egypt and with regards to what the Lord did for Israel regarding the kings that opposed them on the other side of the Jordan. (deep inside their hearts they believe that the God of Israel is going to give them the land. and that is why they have come.)
 - 2. Not only their words, but also their actions speak of their faith. They have come to present themselves as servants to Joshua and Israel. In doing so they declare that they are ready to abandon their old gods and to embrace the God of Israel also as their only and true God. True faith always involves a leaving and losing and letting go.

Some Implications and Applications:

- 1. Note here the condescending of God. He might have destroyed the Gibeonites for their practice of deceit and for the mixture of fear and unbelief with their faith. But He chooses to look upon the presence of grace, however puny it was and ill developed.
He does not quench the smoking flax and break the bruised reed. Isaiah. 42:3 and Matthew 12:20.
How this ought to encourage us when our hearts are filled with many a fear and many a doubt while seeking out God's mercy to us in Christ.
- 2. Let us beware not to draw the wrong conclusion out of this text as though Gibeon was rewarded for their deceit. Gibeon inherited the blessing in spite of their deceit.
- 3. Observe here what a mixture the human heart is. Even with the presence of grace. This ought to foster in us the disposition of the Gibeonites, the disposition of humility. This mixture precludes all merit on our part and it ascribes all blessing received, to the unmerited favor of God alone.
- 4. Finally let us learn from the Gibeonites how to face our own judgment. Like the Gibeonites let us go to the greater Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us say to Him, "We are your servants, therefore make a covenant with us." Let us say it with the humility of the Gibeonites, yet without their deceit, fueled by fear.
- 5. The Lord's table is the Lord's answer to us. Here is His covenant with us. We are accepted because Christ died for us.