

JOSHUA 9:17-27
THE AGONY OF DECEIT!
PART 3

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 9 as we continue our study through this amazing book and seek those lessons that God has for us. Keep in mind that this book deals with victorious Christian living and we will learn from the victories that the children of Israel had, and we will also learn from their mistakes.

And that truly is how we learn. Not only from those victories but also from those defeats, what we did wrong so the next time we won't do them!

Here in Joshua chapter 9 we see the children of Israel fall prey to deception by the hands of the Gibeonites!

And we saw in this chapter how Satan uses two types of attacks in our lives to defeat us.

He uses the frontal attack like six nations that gathered their forces together to attack the children of Israel. They knew they were in trouble and there is no way they would be able to defeat the children of Israel by themselves. So they joined forces.

But there was one group that saw that even with joining together to fight against them would not help, so they deceived the children of Israel.

You see, the Gibeonites were the next target for them. And thus, they gathered some men together to trick the children of Israel into believing that they came from a far country. And they were very smart here.

If they were in the land of Canaan, they were to be destroyed. Thus, they put old clothes on, gathered old wineskins and old bread, they put on old shoes and they pretended that they were from a far country and they were seeking peace with the children of Israel.

It all looked good outwardly, this deception was amazing, and it fooled Joshua and the children of Israel!

And we know that deception is a big part of the last days, even in the church!

Noah Webster defined this word, “deceptive” as follows: ***“Tending to deceive; having the power to mislead, or impress false opinions; as a deceptive countenance or appearance.”***

(American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828)

Make no mistake about it, deception has been around since the Garden of Eden as we see Satan deceive Eve!

And Satan has continued the widespread usage of deception. Paul warned Timothy, **“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”** (2 Timothy 3:13).

And deception will continue to compound as the Church Age progresses. His deception has a purpose; it is leading to a time when the Antichrist will take control of the world. The Antichrist will rule with lies and dominating brutal force. Those who oppose him and his rule will lose their lives (Revelation 17:6). Satan is preparing the people of this world for this time by leading them into deception.

But the church has been warned about these times. And we have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to show us what is right and what is wrong! So what is the problem?

The problem is that many Christians today will believe what someone says, what this book has to say, what this teaching is saying instead of what the Word of God is saying!

Also, what I find interesting is that in these days we are living in we are being told not to expose the false teachers. We are told not to speak so negatively. We are told to let people know what you are for and not what you are against!

And the Trojan Horse has come into the church and the church is in trouble because we are not even aware of the deception that is out there. In fact, we are not even fighting against it, we are welcoming it into the church!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Objection is often raised even by some sound in the faith regarding the exposure of error as being entirely negative and of no real edification. Of late, the hue and cry has been against any and all negative teaching. But the brethren who assume this attitude forget that a large part of the New Testament, both of the teaching of our blessed Lord Himself and the writings of the apostles, is made up of this very character of ministry, namely, showing the Satanic origin and, therefore, the unsettling results of the propagation of erroneous systems which Peter, in his second epistle, so definitely refers to as “damnable heresies.”

Our Lord prophesied, “Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” Within our own day, how many false prophets have risen; and oh, how many are the deceived! Paul predicted, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.”

My own observation is that these “grievous wolves,” alone and in packs, are not sparing even the most favored flocks. Under shepherds in these “perilous times” will do well to note the apostle’s warning: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” It is as important in these days as in Paul’s, in fact, it is increasingly important-to expose the many types of false teaching that, on every hand, abound more and more.

We are called upon to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” while we hold the truth in love. The faith means the whole body of revealed truth, and to contend for all of God’s truth necessitates some negative teaching. The choice is not left with us. Jude said he preferred a different, a pleasanter theme – “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3, 4).

Paul likewise admonishes us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

This does not imply harsh treatment of those entrapped by error-quite the opposite. If it be objected that exposure to error necessitates unkind reflection upon others who do not see as we do, our answer is: it has always been the duty of every loyal servant of Christ to warn against any teaching that would make Him less precious or cast reflection upon His finished redemptive work and the all-sufficiency of His present service as our great High Priest and Advocate.

Every system of teaching can be judged by what it sets forth as to these fundamental truths of the faith. “What think ye of Christ?” is still the true test of every creed. The Christ of the Bible is certainly not the Christ of any false “-ism.” Each of the cults has its hideous caricature of our lovely Lord.

Let us who have been redeemed at the cost of His precious blood be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” As the battle against the forces of evil waxes ever more hot, we have need for God-given valor.

There is constant temptation to compromise. “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” It is always right to stand firmly for what God has revealed concerning His blessed Son’s person and work. The “father of lies” deals in half-truths and specializes in most subtle fallacies concerning the Lord Jesus, our sole and sufficient Savior.

Error is like leaven of which we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.

Exposing error is most unpopular work. But from every true standpoint it is worthwhile work. To our Savior, it means that He receives from us, His blood-bought ones, the loyalty that is His due. To ourselves, if we consider “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” it ensures future reward, a thousand-fold. And to souls “caught in the snare of the fowler” - how many of them God only knows-it may mean light and life, abundant and everlasting.

- Dr. Harry Ironside (1876-1951)

Who is this man of God who speaks about contending for the faith? We need more men like that today who are willing to stand up for the truth and expose the lies that are out there!
Who is this watchman on the wall?

It is Dr. Harry Ironside who served as pastor of Chicago’s Moody Memorial Church from 1930 to 1948! He died in 1951!

Thus, this message is over 70 years old! And I guess I should not say message; it is really a warning to the church of today and we did not listen!

Where did the children of Israel go wrong? The same place we go wrong! They depended upon their own wisdom of the situation, their own understanding of the situation!

Let's face it, it looked authentic and that is the problem with deception, it looks real, it looks like it is from God!

False teachers don't go around and say, "***This is my opinion . . .***" No, they say, "***Thus says the Lord!***"

Remember what Paul said as he warned us in II Corinthians 11:13-15, "**For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.**"

That is the problem with deception, with false teachers. They speak as if they were speaking for God and yet, what they are saying is contrary to the Word of God!

And there is the answer, allow the Word of God with the Spirit of God to expose the false teachers and their teaching!

Listen carefully to what we are told in Joshua 9:14-16, "**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.**"

The key here is that “**they did not ask counsel of the Lord.**” It felt right. I looked good. What can go wrong with making a covenant with them? We will see the problem this morning as we look at this topic of, *The Agony of Deceit!*

This will be our last study on this topic here in Joshua chapter 9, and we will be looking at two main points. They are as follows:

THE COVENANT IS BINDING – JOSHUA 9:17-20

CONDEMNATION FOR THE DECEPTION – JOSHUA 9:21-27

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Joshua chapter 9, beginning in verse 17 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JOSHUA 9

VERSES 17-20

Now this is the first point I want you to see. This covenant that they had made with the Gibeonites was binding. They could not go back on the deal that they made with them, that they would not destroy them!

And think of a covenant as a contract between individuals. I checked out one web site and I thought it was interesting what their opening statement was. It read, “When is a contract binding? Knowing this can help you argue the validity of one before the courts.”

In other words, there are ways of getting out of contracts, you just need to figure out what to say, how to argue your case before the judge!

Now I hate to tell you but the Judge we stand before is God and when you make a contract or covenant, it is binding!

And yes, the Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the children of Israel, but that was not a loophole to get out of this covenant that they made with them.

Now you may not think that is fair but the Gibeonites were acting just as the unsaved would, they were deceptive.

So how can the children of Israel be accountable for their deception?

Because, **“they did not ask counsel of the LORD.”**

You see, if they took the time to pray, to seek direction from the Lord, the Lord would have shown them what they were doing, and the covenant would have never been made! But they did not seek counsel from the Lord, and they were now accountable to keep this covenant!

Here in Joshua we see the people are complaining and wondering why they can't wipe out these evil, these lying people?

And Joshua does the right thing and he tells them that they made a covenant with them not to destroy them and now they can't go back on their word.

Here's the thing. You can't take a mistake you made and try to correct it with another mistake or as the saying goes, “Two wrongs don't make a right!”

Yes, there was pressure upon them to wipe out the Gibeonites but to do what was right was more important than giving into that pressure. That is an important lesson not only for leaders but also for all of us.

Think about it like this. A girl is dating this guy and she tells him that she is using birth control. They have sex together outside of marriage and guess what? Yes, she gets pregnant.

Did she lie? Yes, she did.

So what should be done?

Since they made, in a sense, this binding covenant and now there is a child who was conceived, they should have the child and not abort that child. In fact, a child should not be aborted!

We will look at this a little closer by looking at marriage in a minute, but I want you to see how binding a covenant is!

It is as Psalm 15:4-5 tells us, **“In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.”**

The Living Bible puts these verses like this, **“speaks out against sin, criticizes those committing it, commends the faithful followers of the Lord, keeps a promise even if it ruins him, does not crush his debtors with high interest rates, and refuses to testify against the innocent despite the bribes offered him-such a man shall stand firm forever.”**

And again, listen to how God holds them accountable to this covenant that they made, even 400 years down the road!

You see, some 400 years later, King Saul broke this covenant with the Gibeonites, and judgment came upon Israel because of it.

We are told in II Samuel 21:1-9, **“Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, ‘It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.’ So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, ‘What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the Lord?’ And the Gibeonites said to him, ‘We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us.’ So he said, ‘Whatever you say, I will do for you.’ Then they answered the king, ‘As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord chose.’ And the king said, ‘I will give them.’ But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the Lord. So they fell, all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.”**

His sin, King Saul's, brought a famine upon the land during the days of King David and he had to deal with that sin before the judgment was stopped.

May we not break the covenants we make with people, especially but not limited to the marriage covenant!

So, a covenant is a binding contract, a promise in God's eyes and thus, we should not enter it lightly because once we do enter it, we are not to break it!

And the other issue with a covenant is that yes, we can be forgiven if we repent if we break our covenant, but there are the consequences for our actions. I think G. Campbell Morgan put it correctly as he wrote, *"A false step taken by a Christian can be forgiven by God, but you must live with the consequences the rest of your life."*

And yet, when it comes to the marriage covenant, we have all kinds of reasons why we can get divorced or break that covenant that we made before God!

"I wasn't walking with the Lord when I got married. Thus, I can get a divorce, God understands!"

"He/she told me that he/she was a Christian before we got married. He/she even went to church. And now that we are married, he/she is not a Christian. He/she doesn't even want to go to church anymore. He/she lied to me and thus, if he/she did that, then this covenant is not binding!"

"I made a mistake and should not have married that person. I felt an uneasy feeling and yet I got married anyway. Thus, I can get a divorce because I should not have married that person in the first place!"

And I can go on and on, but you get the idea. And do you know the answer to those statements about getting a divorce?

NO! NO! NO! NO, YOU CAN'T! The covenant and commitment still stand's!

Now, if you get married and you divorce your wife or husband without biblical justification, you are not helping the situation.

You got married by being disobedient to God and now, since you want out, you get a divorce and you are continuing to be disobedient to God and that is not a good thing. There are consequences to our actions.

I am not saying God can't forgive, He does. Praise God for His grace and mercy that He extends to us. But again, there are always consequences to our disobedience to the Lord as we saw with King Saul and what he did to the Gibeonites!

Now what if you feel you married the wrong person?

The moment you got married, that wrong person became the right person in God's eyes! You made a covenant not only with that person, but with the Lord and you need to keep it!

Listen to what we are told in Matthew 19:3-6 regarding marriage and what Jesus has to say. We are told, **“The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”**

We see here that the Pharisees wanted to talk about divorce and the rabbinical opinions, but not Jesus.

He takes them back to the Scriptures to talk about marriage! In fact, He is rebuking them and their question because they should have known the answer to this question.

Jesus tells them, “**Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female.**”

I don't care what anyone's opinion is and neither does Jesus! What do the Scriptures say!

So Jesus takes them back to the very beginning, to the Garden of Eden. And Jesus is taking them back before the Law, not to the tradition or any religious leader, but to God Himself.

Thus, Jesus took the narrow view, and made it even stricter by saying that God has joined man and woman together, and thus, they should not be separated, CHORIZETO in the Greek, which speaks of divorce!

Now they got Him, or so they thought. You see, Jesus said that there should be no divorce, no separation. A covenant between the two was made before each other and before God and it should not be separated!

But listen to what transpired as they try to catch Jesus and discredit Him before the people.

We are told in Matthew 19:7-9, “**They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’**”

Here is the controversy that these religious leaders wanted to stir up.

Moses received the Law from God and in it there is a provision for divorce.

Now here comes Jesus, claiming to be God, and yet He is contradicting what Moses said. And if that is true, then Jesus is also in conflict with God and thus, He must not be of God.

“Gotcha,” they thought!

But they missed the point and Jesus tells these religious leaders that very thing.

You see, Jesus did not say that God commanded them to get a divorce but that He permitted it not because God was in favor of it, but it was **“because of the hardness of your hearts.”**

It was as if Jesus said, ***“Here is the ideal for marriage; and here is the allowance of God when human sinfulness and hardness of heart has made the ideal unobtainable.”***

You see, God’s divine plan was that a man and a woman would be joined together in marriage for a lifetime.

But, because of man’s hard heart, God allowed for divorce.

This is not a command or a mandate for divorce, but it is a provision that God allowed in the event of adultery or sexual sin.

And even then, there should be a time for reconciliation; it shouldn’t be used as a loop hole to get out of marriage.

Paul, in Ephesians 5:31 wrote in regard to marriage, **“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”**

Paul uses the Greek word PROSKOLLAO, (pros-kol-lah’-o) for **“joined”** and it speaks of gluing together, adhering to one another.

That is why the man is to **LEAVE** his mother and father, the same with the woman, because they are now joined together with each other, not with their parents. The cord needs to be cut or there will be problems.

Also, if in marriage the couple is joined together or glued together, what happens when they are pulled apart, like in divorce?

You know what happens when you try to pull two pieces of wood apart that have been glued together, there are splinters, jagged edges, it is a mess and the same is true in divorce.

That is why God hates it, it destroys lives and God never intended it to be that way!

In saying that, marriage then is not easy, you are joined together for life!

But you have made this covenant and you need to honor it!

And let me say this, if you take your faith seriously, you are less likely to get a divorce. That is not just my view, it is what the statistics say. We are told,

Professor Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, explains from his analysis of people who identify as Christians but rarely attend church, that 60 percent of these have been divorced. Of those who attend church regularly, 38 percent have been divorced.

Other data from additional sociologists of family and religion suggest a significant marital stability divide between those who take their faith seriously and those who do not.

W. Bradford Wilcox, a leading sociologist at the University of Virginia and director of the National Marriage Project, finds from his own analysis that “active conservative Protestants” who regularly attend church have are 35 percent *less likely to divorce* compared to those who have no affiliation. Nominally attending conservative Protestants are 20 percent more likely to divorce, compared to secular Americans.

Professor Scott Stanley from the University of Denver, working with an absolute all-star team of leading sociologists on the Oklahoma Marriage Study, explains that couples with a vibrant religious faith had more and higher levels of the qualities couples need to avoid divorce.

“Whether young or old, male or female, low-income or not, those who said that they were more religious reported higher average levels of commitment to their partners, higher levels of marital satisfaction, less thinking and talking about divorce and lower levels of negative interaction. These patterns held true when controlling for such important variables as income, education, and age at first marriage.”

These positive factors translated into actual lowered risk of divorce among active believers.

“Those who say they are more religious are less likely, not more, to have already experienced divorce. Likewise, those who report more frequent attendance at religious services were significantly less likely to have been divorced.”

- <http://bit.ly/2C2E1SV>

No matter what you may think, you can't argue the point about our covenants, the contracts we make, are binding! We see that here with Joshua and the Gibeonites and no matter how untruthful they were, the children of Israel were held to a higher standard because they should have known better and they were accountable before God to keep that covenant or that contract!

May your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No” be “No” and whatever you say, you need to fulfill that! ***A COVENANT IS BINDING!***

Now, as we are going to see, even with our bad decisions, God can turn them into good.

My wife was a Christian when we met, and I was not. It was not even close for me. I was as far away from God as you could be.

I did not even believe there was a God and yet, my wife had a personal relationship with the Lord!

Yes, I was a pagan! I was an unbeliever! No doubt about it!

Then how could she date me?

Because she was not in a fellowship with believers, she was on her own and she came to the conclusion that I was saved, I just didn't know it!

It reminds me a lot of what Joshua was doing. He was looking at the outward picture and was deceived because he did not ask counsel of the Lord!

And we fell in love and we got married and I still was not a believer.

I hindered her relationship with God because I had no interest in God.

Now you may be thinking, "What good could come from this?"

All I can say is that God is gracious and merciful because there are consequences for our actions.

That covenant that Julie made was binding, even though I was not a Christian. Even though she was not doing what God wanted her to do. And we will see that more with Joshua and the Gibeonites as we read on.

So let's pick up in verse 21 of Joshua chapter 9 and see what happened with this covenant that Joshua and the children of Israel made with the Gibeonites!

VERSES 21-27

Here we see the *CONDEMNATION FOR THE DECEPTION!*

The deception that they used upon the children of Israel worked beautifully, but the Gibeonites did not get away with this deception. Not at all! You see, there was a penalty to pay, even though their lives were spared.

And, even though the Gibeonites deceived the children of Israel, the children of Israel made a covenant with them that they would not kill them and thus, they could not go back on that covenant, as we have seen.

So, instead they controlled the Gibeonites by making them perpetual workmen for the tabernacle service.

Listen again to what Joshua told them after rebuking them for lying, **“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 9:23.

In other words, they would cut the wood for the sacrificial fires of the tabernacle and carry the water that was used in its service!

And we will talk more about this in a minute. But first I want to focus on the response of the Gibeonites. They tell Joshua why they lied, why they deceived them and then we see their response to what they were going to be made to do.

In Joshua 9:24-25 we are told, **“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 once again we see the reason for their lies, their deception, they were trying to spare their lives.

I do find it interesting that they had heard what God said to Moses about all the land being given to the children of Israel and that they were to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, and they believed it!

Think about that one for a minute. At this point I don't believe that they are saved, they are just aware of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But they believed what their God could do!

We don't always see that with the children of Israel, that they believed in the promises of God and acted upon that promise!

Now, before we are too harsh on them, what about us? Do we believe in the promises of God for our lives? Are we willing to trust in Him all the days of our life? Are we living what we say we believe?

The Gibeonites believed in what God had promised the children of Israel and that is why they lied!

I wonder what God can do in us and through us if we truly believed in the promises that He has given to us?

And there are estimates of God's promises to us in the Bible, from 3,000 to 30,000 in the Scriptures. It seems like a more accurate number would be around 8,000 to 10,000! And I want to share some with you, and you ask yourself if you truly believe what God is saying to you. And we should because when God makes a promise to us, you can take it to the bank, it is that sure!

In I John 2:25, John tells us, "**And this is the promise that He has promised us - eternal life.**"

What a great promise that is because that promise of eternal life is not based upon my faithfulness or my work but upon the faithfulness of God and His finished work on the cross of Calvary, paying in full the penalty for my sins! Do you believe it?

The next one is found in II Peter 1:2-4 as Peter tells us, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”**

Wow, we can spend a long time on this. But look at God’s promise to us. He has given to us in His Word all we need to live by, to grow by and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can accomplish this. And He has given to us **“exceedingly great and precious promises.”** The question is, “Do you believe it?”

I love this promise that God gives to us in Jeremiah 29:11, **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”**

If you are not at peace, if you are anxious, worried about this and worried about that, that is not what God is thinking towards you. He wants to give you His peace. Not an absence of problems but a peace through the storms of life and looking ahead to a future, to truly hope in Him and what He has promised! Again, do you believe?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

We can make life so complicated and Jesus wants us to come to Him and lay these things at His feet. But we like to be in control and as we try to accomplish these tasks apart from Christ, we are weighed down, there is no rest for our souls. And the answer is to come to Him, give it to Him and learn from Him because what He has for you, will be perfect for your life. I am not saying that it will be easy, but as we surrender to Christ, as we are empowered by His Spirit, we can accomplish these things and find that rest we are looking for. Again, do you believe?

Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**

I like that. God will give to me the things that I need, not necessarily want, to accomplish what He wants me to do! Do you believe?

And I do love what Paul says in Romans 8:37-39, **“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Have you ever felt that you blew it and God does not love you any longer? I am sure most if not all of us have felt that way before. What is the problem? The problem is simple, you are not trusting what God has promised in His Word, that nothing **“shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** What a precious promise that is to us, do you believe it?

And lastly, and there are many, many more as I have said, in John 14:27-28 Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

Are you at peace right now? Is your heart troubled over a situation or situations in your life? Are you fearful of this and that? What is the problem if you are? The problem is we have let the situation or situations in our life overwhelm us. And I am not saying that they are easy. What I am saying is that these things have blocked God from the picture, and you are so focused on them, that you can't see God or His peace in this. Jesus wants to give us peace, do you believe that?

If these unsaved Gibeonites could believe in what God had promised the children of Israel, why can't we believe what God has promised us, His children? The reason is simple, ***UNBELIEF!*** And all I can say is, ***“Lord, help me with my unbelief!”***

So we see here that Joshua makes the Gibeonites ***wood cutters*** and ***water carriers*** for the people of God.

And what we see here is that God takes a bad situation, made because they didn't seek the Lord and He will use it for good.

Like I have said, the Gibeonites understood the power of God and they would come to know this God as they served Him in the Temple as woodcutters and carrying the water.

And, interestingly enough, they are willing to serve the Lord no matter what capacity that would be, as we have seen!

What a great lesson for us, as David said in Psalm 84:10, **“For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”**

I want you to see how gracious and merciful our God is. God is not looking to destroy people but to save them. And one of the clearest verses showing us this fact, is, of course, John 3:16-17, as Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

And as we have seen in our study of Joshua, Rahab the harlot was saved, and now we see how these lying Gibeonites also are saved!

They both came to the God of Israel as sinners and so did we! And look at how God transformed their lives and how they served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.

Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon. (1 Chronicles 16:39-40 and 21:29)

At least one of David’s mighty men was a Gibeonite. (1 Chronicles 12:4)

God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon. (1 Kings 3:4)

After the Babylonian captivity a group of Gibeonites were listed among those returning to the land of Israel - they stayed faithful not because they were forced to but by this time because they wanted to.

Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah.

(Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25)

And I do love this because this is just another example of the great things God can do with people who are sinners but come to Him in humility and love.

If you doubt that you need to look in a mirror because you will see another example of the great things God can do with a person who was a sinner and yet came to the Lord in humility and love and is used mightily by Him!

And yes, we will make mistakes, but trust in God's promises. God can take our mistakes, our failures and use them for good, to make us stronger!

Remember what I said about my wife Julie and how she married a pagan, me, when she was a believer. That was not good. That was wrong. It is never right to do that.

And yet, God took her mistake, her failure to seek His counsel and He brought about good!

Julie prayed for me and after a few years of marriage, I came to saving faith! She kept the covenant that she made with me and God and did not break it and God blessed it.

Now that does not always happen when you marry an unbeliever, and thus, you shouldn't marry someone who is not saved. But in that God can make us stronger.

And what I am saying is this. That Gibeonite you are married to, that "*mistake*" that you are now bound to in marriage that is bringing so much heartache into your life is being used by God to drive you to your knees every day!

And our God is in the business of miracles! What may seem impossible for us to accomplish, He can because with God all things are possible!

Let me say this again. Make no mistake about it, God can turn the hardest pagan into a Spirit-filled child of God and give them a ministry in the house of God where they will bless the people of God not because you force them to come to church but because God has done a work in their heart and they now love to be in church serving the Lord and His people!

Hang in there, don't give up. It won't always be easy, but in the end, there is that blessing of God not only working in your heart, but also in the heart of your spouse!

And we can apply that to the things we encounter in life. If we make a promise, fulfill what you have promised. It may not be easy, but be faithful!

Remember, the Gibeonites were bringing the wood for the fire of sacrifice in the tabernacle.

Think about it like this. God used these unbelievers, these deceivers to be the very instruments that God would use to cause the fire of the altar to burn and to purify and cleanse God's people for worship. Maybe that is what God is doing with the Gibeonite in your life!

Now, we need to also understand that there is one way to avoid all of this deception, all the lies that are out there that people are trying to perpetrate upon you. The answer is this, ***BRING EVERYTHING BEFORE THE LORD AND SEEK HIS DIRECTION, NOT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION!***

It is as Solomon said in Proverbs 3:5-6, "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**"

First, you have to trust in the Lord. You have to believe that what God is telling you, the things that He is showing you are for your good. He is not trying to hurt you but help you. He is not trying to ruin your fun but to bless you! Believe it in your heart and live it in your life – your trust in the Lord!

Don't be like Joshua and the children of Israel, who trusted in their own understanding of the situation and were deceived. Yes, everything looked good but looks can be deceiving and they were! I am sure we have found that out many times in our own lives!

Seek counsel from the Lord, He knows everything and thus, He will direct our steps, the paths we are to take perfectly.

As I begin to close this study on *The Agony of Deceit*, let me share this with you. We are told,

“Whoever longs for a quiet life has been born in the wrong generation.”

These words are attributed to Trotsky, as the Russian revolution appeared to sweep everything away before its advance. But has there ever been a generation that has not known conflict as a given of everyday life?

Certainly no Christian can expect to be immune from the conflict “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” all of what are “the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11, 12).

That is why the Prince of Peace told his disciples, “Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

There is no easy ride for the people of God in this fallen world, for it lies in the powerful grip of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

Realism recognizes that conflict is endemic to human life and unavoidable for a Christian disciple.

- David Jackman, Joshua – People of God’s Purpose, p. 103

Yes, we will face conflict. Sometimes it will be a frontal attack by the enemy, which is easy to recognize.

But sometimes they will use deception, like the Trojan Horse, to get into our lives and to bring us down. Be careful. Be wise. And, ***ALWAYS ASK COUNSEL OF THE LORD SO THAT HE MAY DIRECT YOUR LIFE – BE IN HIS WORD!***

It is as David said in Psalm 119:103-105, **“How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”**

My we be directed by Him so that we will not be deceived!