

Activate Your Knowledge of God

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Date: 07 March 2021

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[0 : 00] So let's read together Joshua chapter 9 and let's learn about the Gibeonites and what's going on here.

So let's hear God's word together. Now, when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things, the kings in the hill country, in the western foothills, and all along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Lebanon, the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel.

However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse. They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended.

They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and mouldy. Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, We have come from a distant country.

Make a treaty with us. The Israelites said to the Hivites, But perhaps you live near us. So how can we make a treaty with you? We are your servants, they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, Who are you and where do you come from?

[1 : 14] They answered, Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God. For we have heard reports of him, all that he did in Egypt, and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, Sion king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan who reigned in Ashtaroth.

And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, Take provisions for your journey. Go and meet them and say to them, We are your servants. Make a treaty with us. This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you.

But now, see how dry and mouldy it is. And these wineskins that were filled were new. But see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey.

The Israelites sampled their provisions, but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by O.

Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbours living near them. So the Israelites set out, and on the third day came to their cities, Gibeon, Kephirah, Beiroth, and Kiriath-Jerim.

[2 : 23] But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders.

But all the leaders answered, We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them. We will let them live, so that God's wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.

They continued, Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly. So the leader's promise to them was kept. Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, Why did you deceive us by saying we live a long way from you?

Well, actually, you live near us. You are now under a curse. You will never be released from service as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God. They answered Joshua, Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all its inhabitants from before you.

So we feared for our lives because of you. And this is why we did this. We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you. So Joshua saved them from the Israelites.

[3 : 33] And they did not kill them. That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would

choose.

And that is what they are to this day. Joshua, big theme. Same as his name means, God saves. It's the theme of the book.

Tonight, what I want us to think about is activating our knowledge of God. We know about activation, don't we?

For example, we think about our mobile phones. Nowadays, you have to wait for an activation code, don't you? Or you might get a prompt to activate your device.

Why? Well, without that activation code, with a phone, you cannot communicate. We cannot access information. Our phone is useless. It's off grid.

[4 : 30] But activation brings it to life. And the point is this. Your knowledge of God and my knowledge of God, it needs to be activated.

The life of faith is putting what we know about God to work in our experience. The theme of Joshua 9 is that the Gibeonites are effective in activating their knowledge of God, and that leads to their salvation.

And we see that the Israelites, they have mixed success in activating what they know of their God. So the big idea is that our knowledge of God must be applied to everyday life, in all aspects of our lives, to live by faith as God's people, to respond well to situations, circumstances, people, crises. We need to activate what we know is true about God. Now, how you do the Gibeonites and the Israelites help us to think about this, activating our knowledge? We see it in what they think about. They think about, we see themes of God's judgment. We'll think about God's wisdom. We'll think about God's honor. And we'll think about God's grace as those themes play out in the minds and the hearts of the Gibeonites and the Israelites.

[5 : 51] And in changing seasons of life, so with the Gibeonites, for example, in great fear, or with the Israelites enjoying peace and blessing, everybody, we need to learn to make our truth about God active.

So let's begin with this theme of the judgment of God. It dominates the first half, first 13 verses, and then verse 24.

The central drama, of course, is Gibeon's deception of Israel. They get their ancient costumes on.

They've got their moldy food in their backpacks. They've got this elaborate disguise.

And it makes for a great story, doesn't it? But why do they do it? Well, we need to know something about their location. Gibeon, for example, that city is only about six miles northwest of Jerusalem.

So it's nearby. So it's in the promised land. And that's significant because they know that the promised land, the people in the promised land, because of their sin, they stand under God's judgment, God's judgment on Canaan.

[6 : 54] And they know it. And their response, verse 6, we have come from a distant country, make a treaty with us. They want a peace treaty.

They are afraid of the judgment of God and they want to be spared. There's a striking contrast, isn't there? At the beginning, verses 1 and 2, we discover all of the kings in the area have heard about God's successes, the success of the people of God.

They've got the same knowledge of God's actions. But all those kings want to reject God and his plan, want to fight against God's people, but not Gibeon. Gibeon moves towards.

Gibeon is much more like Rahab, recognises what God is doing and shows faith. Gibeon activates his knowledge of the true God.

So we see these messengers speaking of the fame of God in verse 9. Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God.

[7 : 59] For we have heard reports of him, all that he did in Egypt and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan. So the fame, the mighty acts of judgment against God's enemies are known.

The salvation of God's people is known. They appreciate that God is most powerful, that the most hostile enemies cannot compare or compete with God.

And so the fame of God motivates them to act. And then in verse 24, They say to Joshua, Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all its inhabitants from before you.

So we feared for our lives because of you. And that's why we did this. So they'd heard and they'd seen the Lord's command being worked out in the promised land. And so they fear the certain

judgment of God.

And so their response is different to the kings around them. They don't fight and they don't resist. Fear rather made them run towards God to seek peace, to avoid the penalty that was due.

[9 : 06] So on the surface, you know, the Gibeonites, they're acting a bit like our friend the gecko over here. You know, we could say, well, here's them putting on their camouflage to escape from a predator. But if we dig a little deeper, this is a confession of faith, having activated their knowledge of God.

God is the powerful king and they stand under God's judgment. And so they want peace. They want salvation. The question that arises for us then is how seriously do you and I take God's judgment? It's a reality often ignored. Or if we think about it, we think, well, it's something for something distant in the future. It's for another time or it's for other people.

But the Bible presents that reality that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God one day to give an account of our lives and especially to give an account of how we have responded to the offer of salvation as Jesus comes as the Savior.

When we think about the judgment of God, it is always wise for us to see it as it plays out at the cross where Jesus dies.

[10 : 22] Because there we see the holy judgment of God. There at the cross, we see the seriousness of sin as Jesus goes under the just judgment of God.

And he feels forsaken and abandoned by his father as he becomes the sin bearer of the world, as he becomes a curse for us. We go to the cross and we see the cost of our salvation.

Our sin is no small thing. The holiness of God is no small thing. It required the blood sacrifice, the death of Jesus as our way to be forgiven and to be right with God.

Have you come to Jesus to seek peace? Are you reconciled with your God this evening?

Well, if not, let me urge you to follow the example of the Gibeonites. Turn from your sin. Recognize the just judgment that you stand under and turn to Jesus as Savior.

[11 : 32] Seek peace from him because he will not refuse you. If you turn to him as Lord and Savior. So the Gibeonites, they activate their knowledge of the judgment of God.

Let's now think about the wisdom of God as it is ignored by Israel. Verse 14 and 15. The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord.

Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live. So what's going on here? Here is Joshua and the leaders in Israel using common sense. What they think is common sense at the expense of seeking God's wisdom.

Common sense without God's wisdom is no sense at all as they discover. Joshua thinks there is no threat. The leaders think there's no threat here. So they don't recognize they need God's help and God's wisdom.

It's the I've got this mentality. I wonder does that sound familiar to you as often it does to me. So let's remember God had clearly given a command.

[12 : 41] Gibeon has remembered. God had given the command destroy the nations in the promised land. Because they were a threat to the people of God because of their sinful practices. Because of their idolatry.

They would pull the people away from God. So this is a big deal. There's no small thing. But what happens is Joshua and the leaders, they look at the food. Look at the clothes. Well, it looks old and moldy.

They're no threat. Let's make peace. They're fooled into thinking. They're distant travelers. There's no problem. So they don't consult with God. They don't pray for the wisdom he provides.

Remember at the beginning we read from James chapter 1. God loves to give wisdom. But we need to ask to express our dependence. And we need to trust that he will supply that wisdom.

And we see Joshua and the leaders fail in that. And Israel then becomes for us a warning sign. Not to be tempted to rely on our own wisdom when everything seems to be sort of flat cam and plain sailing.

[13 : 44] When there's no crisis. God's design is that we always live conscious of him. That we are always dependent on him. As God's children, we never outgrow our need of him.

Yeah, it's unlike in our own families. We want to train up our children towards independence. So that they can stand on their own two feet. God wants us to remain completely dependent on him.

Knowing his help and grace and strength and presence every day. And so it teaches us that you and I are too busy not to pray.

To borrow from Bill Hybel's helpful book title. And maybe you've heard it said of Martin Luther. As he put it in his own words. I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer. A recognition that my to-do list and your to-do list isn't a moment for us to roll our sleeves up. And to redouble our efforts and just to grind it out.

[14:51] But rather, as we recognise our dependence, that we would turn to God in prayer to commit our to-do list, our day to him and to seek his wisdom.

So Israel, we're asking the right questions about these men to find out where they're from. But they didn't enquire of the Lord.

It's a challenge to humble ourselves. To not rely on our own wisdom. Our own initiative.

Our own past experience. Our past successes. Think about how you typically go about life in your family.

Maybe parenting. How do you approach your day to day work? What about if you have responsibility in church life? As you face decisions.

[15:52] Will you typically take time before that moment, before that conversation, before that decision to pray, to read, to seek wisdom, to humble yourself?

By a negative example, Israel is teaching us to activate what we know of the wisdom of God. Think about Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path. That's the wisdom we need to activate in our lives. To draw on the wisdom of God. The next thing, and this is where Israel does get it right, is when it comes to the honour of God.

This is verse 16 to 21. As they begin to deal with sort of the situation now that they've made the peace treaty. Dale Ralph Davis has got a very helpful book on Joshua.

[16:52] He says we must glorify and magnify the grace of God in our messes.

And here is a mess of Israel's own making. Here is a foolish lack of wisdom and now they're dealing with the consequences. And in that moment, they are not to make things worse.

Rather, they must resolve to act in accordance with God's will and God's word from that moment on. So verse 16 tells us that three days later, after they made the treaty, the Israelites heard that the Gibeonites were neighbours living near them.

So what happened is Israel, the army marches on Gibeon. But, verse 18, the Israelites did not attack them because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel.

And that oath, the leaders say, must be honoured. It was foolish, but it must be honoured because it was an oath before God. And what we see is that the people, the whole assembly, they grumble against the leaders, against their foolish leaders.

[18:04] But, verses 19 to 21, all the leaders answered, We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This oath must be kept. Otherwise, verse 20, Otherwise, God's wrath would follow them for breaking their oath.

So, what's happening? Israel is now living faithfully in the mess that they had made. They didn't think about the wisdom of God, but they do think about the honour of God.

And that shapes their response to the mess that they made. So what truth have they activated? The reality that God's honour matters more than their national pride.

They must obey now while they live with the result of their foolishness. This is not the time for them to try and save face or to attack, to break the oath.

No, they must honour that oath because they want to honour the Lord. Again, Dale Ralph Davis, he tells a story from his family.

[19:11] One of his sons who, I think in primary school, placed a bet of \$3 with another classmate on a particular baseball match.

And the team lost. And so he had lost the bet. Now, Ralph Davis appreciates that gambling is wrong, that it is folly.

But he made his son honour that day. Because of this principle, that we are to be obedient in the middle of our folly and mistakes and bad judgment.

That we don't keep going down the same road that leads us away from God. Rather, we resolve to put things right and live God's way, regardless of circumstances. God's desire is that we would confess our sin and our folly.

And from that moment on, resolve to honour, to obey, even as life might be a total mess. And in moments like that, we need to activate gospel truth.

[20 : 22] Think about Jesus, the true, the greater Joshua. What do we know about Jesus? Jesus always lived for the Father's glory. Always lived for the Father's honour.

Never engaged in folly. Never led into sin. Always living by the wisdom of God. And we know that Jesus went to the cross for us in what's often known as the great exchange.

Jesus on the cross takes our punishment for our lack of wisdom. For our dishonouring of God. For our folly and our sin.

He takes our sin and he gives us his perfect record of righteousness. Always honouring. Always obeying. And so when God looks at us as we are trusting in Christ.

God can and God does gladly accept us as he sees us in Christ. And so there is hope and there is good news for us.

[21 : 31] So maybe we find ourselves like Israel. Having to deal with the mess of our own making. Turn to Jesus.

Turn to Jesus. Confess your sin. And with his help honour God today. Whatever that looks like. Remembering that in Jesus your sins have been forgiven.

That in Christ our mistakes don't write us off. That there is grace for us. And that's the last thing that we are going to see in our story.

This last great truth that needs to be activated is the grace of God. Verse 22 to the end. I love how this story ends up.

These Gibeonite geckos become part of God's worshipping people. So remember Israel has marched. The leaders have said no we can't attack.

[22 : 35] We must keep the oath. But then there's a confrontation. Joshua verse 22 summon the Gibeonites out. And say why did you deceive us? You are now under a curse.

There's the verdict. They are under God's curse. That was remember God's verdict on Canaan. That is their just deserts. But Gibeon.

They're activating again their knowledge of God. And they're going to appeal for mercy. Verse 25. We are now in your hands.

Do to us whatever seems good and right to you. They appeal to the people of God. Ultimately they're appealing to Israel's God. And the outcome is the one time in the book where we read verse 26.

Joshua saved them. Joshua, God's leader, shows them God's grace. Joshua saves them. And so, you know, the story begins where they're terrified for their lives and they're dressed up trying to fool the people of God.

[23 : 48] Joshua saves them. Joshua saves them. And the story ends. Not with them being rejected. Not with them being destroyed. But that day he made the Gibeonite woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose.

And that's what they are to this day. Where are they? They're serving the altar. They're part of the worshipping community. They become servants of the living God.

For Gibeon, the curse is reversed. They don't receive judgment. Instead, they receive blessing at the hands of Joshua, God's chosen leader.

And doesn't this take us to the very heart of the gospel? You and I, when we stop to reflect for even a moment, we know that we are sinful.

We know that we have not loved God perfectly. That we have not loved others perfectly. That we have broken God's commands. That we are guilty of making created things more valuable to us than God is.

[25 : 05] In our thoughts, our words and our actions, we are sinners against a holy God. And as a result, we stand under the curse of God.

Deserving to be separated from God and all that is good forever. Deserving the judgment of hell because of our disobedience.

That's what we deserve. But what we have is the God of grace who in love sends his son Jesus. And Jesus in love goes to the cross and goes under the curse.

He becomes a curse for us. So that the love of God and the grace of God might be poured out on people like us. Natural born enemies against God.

Outsiders from God's kingdom. That we can be brought in and brought near and brought to enjoy God's love. To enjoy being the people of God.

[26 : 07] So the truth of the gospel is a truth that must be activated in our lives. Here is our source of joy. It's our amazing grace that God shows to us. Here is the source of our true identity.

That yes, by nature we are rebels. But by God's grace we are worshippers. So let me say once again. As the people of God to the church.

We must activate our knowledge of God. You know whether my phone. Whether my devices are activated. It determines what real value it brings. A phone that's not activated is just a brick.

Likewise our faith has real value to us. When we put what we know about God to work in our lives. So that we allow God's word and God's promises and God's character to come to bear on the circumstances of our Monday to Friday.

Maybe today you're feeling weary. Feeling discouraged. Feeling anxious and uncertain. You and I, we need to activate our faith.

[27 : 20] To understand the truths of God's powerful care. Of his love and grace. Of the wisdom and help he provides. Of the intimacy that we enjoy through prayer. So let Joshua 9 encourage you to lean into God.

And lean into God's word. Misal Goblins and Zoe.

ümü C■.com I think folded each one in God's words and I can express you to many and God.

Either way or hold you into, then there's time to watch. Samerif■■ eval Laf.com I think so.

I think that's how it is. I'm having to memorize you. Because Mama 1000 is flowing through prayer.