

## God's Gameplan: Resisting Compromise

### Joshua 9:1-15

Over the past several weeks we have been studying the book of Joshua. We aren't going through the entire book, but we are taking snapshots along the way that give us a great glimpse into what the book is all about. Of course, Joshua is a historic account of what God did in, through, and for the Israelites as He led them into the much-anticipated land of promise called Canaan. Forty years prior to this moment God had promised this land to them. However, they quickly doubted God and refused to move forward in faith. The result was heartbreaking. Because of their unbelief they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Then after their forty years of wandering, the generation of doubters had passed away, and God saw fit that they were ready to move forward. So, the story of Joshua is about how God led Joshua and the Israelites into the promised land.

Something that is surprising to some, however, is that the promised land could not be claimed without fighting some battles. Yes, God had established relationship with His people. Yes, God had promised them the land. Yes, God was with them every step of the way, but still they would fight battles. In fact, there are at least 30 people groups that are mentioned who opposed the Israelites and the God they served. Perhaps that comes as a surprise to you. In fact, last week someone said to me, "I didn't realize that there were so many battles in Joshua." But, this shouldn't surprise us at all. While the book of Joshua is an actual historical account of the Israelites, it also teaches us much about the battles that we, too, face today. Remember, these are God's people. Because they belonged to Him and had received His promises, all they had to do was walk forward in faith. The same is true for us today. For all who believe in Jesus Christ, we are God's chosen people. We are on His side. We are on His team. Because Jesus died and rose again from the grave, He has already won the victory. As a result, all who believe in Him as Lord also experience victory. **1 John 5:4-5** says it clearly, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our FAITH. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" We have victory. The war has been won. Praise the Lord! However, we must also realize that we still face battles every day.

While the verbiage of Joshua is speaking of physical battles, we understand that today all of God's children are in a spiritual battle. Sooner or later every believer discovers that the Christian life is indeed a battleground. Think back to before you were a Christian. Satan was not opposed to you at all. You were no threat to him or his agenda. But, when you committed your life to Jesus, you chose sides. You declared loud and clear who you were following. That was a joyous day because on that day you were forgiven, cleansed, restored to God, and made a part of the family of God. But on that day, you also were enlisted as a soldier of Jesus Christ. So, if you are a Christian you must know that you are a soldier in the Lord's Army. The Apostle Paul understood that we as Christians are engaged in a spiritual war that is just as real as the physical battles that we read of in Joshua. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:3**, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." IOW, as a believer, we must know that we are soldiers in a battle that is being waged and we cannot stop. We cannot lay down. We cannot

give up. We must endure. Friends, God is at work in this church. He is opening ministry opportunities in the community. We cannot ignore the fact that we are in a spiritual battle and we must be prepared for the various schemes the enemy will bring against us.

This was the same for the Israelites in Joshua 9. As we have seen in previous messages, they were in a place of great victory. They had been stirred by God to move, so they stepped out in faith and obeyed. They had experienced the miraculous parting of the Jordan River, the walls of Jericho had miraculously fallen, and after a small setback at Ai they quickly rallied and overtook that city as well. They seemed to have learned the keys to walking forward in victory. They seemed to be ready for battle. But, just when they thought they were ready to stand, they were confronted with a tactic from the enemy that they weren't ready for. My hope today is to show us how our enemy, the devil, still uses this method today and then reveal how we can overcome him.

Read Text

The book of Joshua started with several direct instructions and promises from God. In **Joshua 1:7b-8**, "Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." IOW, God told Joshua he must study the commandments that He had given to Moses, and that he would only have success if he was obedient. So, I can picture Joshua studying the words that God had given to Moses. He wanted to understand every detail of what God had spoken, including God's commands concerning the promised land. In Deuteronomy 20:10-20, God had already given clear instructions that all the cities inside the land of Canaan were to be destroyed. He had called His people to be holy and He didn't want them to be given to the false gods and practices of these pagan peoples. This was God's clear command. Joshua knew what God was leading him to do. And, he seems focused on moving forward for the Lord. However, he wasn't ready for the type of attack that was coming. The enemy was about to bring a very subtle and crafty attack that would seek to hinder God's work. From this passage, I want us to see three actions that we need to keep so that we can resist compromise.

### **I. We Must be Aware of the Enemy's Attack (vs. 1-2)**

We must not forget that this whole situation is happening on the heels of victory. **Warren Wiersbe** says it best, "We are never more vulnerable than when on the heels of great victories." The Israelites likely felt invincible at this moment. They had no reason to suspect that anything was wrong. They had experienced amazing and supernatural victories, but God knew that the enemy was crouching at the door. The enemy was planning and preparing to make their move and attack. The Israelites needed to be watchful because something very interesting was happening in verses 1-2. We learn that the enemies were aware of the power of the God of Israel and that they felt incapable of beating Him on their own. So, these various enemies all conspired together to fight Joshua and the Israelites. These groups were the most powerful groups in the

entire region. They had skilled warriors and plenty of experience. Though these groups didn't like each other, they teamed up together to attack God's people. The Israelites didn't know what how powerful of an attack they were about to face, but the enemy was plotting and looking for the right moment.

This reality should paint a clear picture to us. In the same way that these enemies came in force to oppose God's people we, too, face a similar battle spiritually. **1 Peter 5:8** describes it like this, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Could this picture be any more dramatic? Our enemy, the devil, is like a roaring lion prowling around seeking someone to devour. **\*\*ILL:** Discovery Channel. The lion is always waiting for the perfect opportunity to pounce. So, what did God tell us to do? He said, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert." We understand what this means. It is telling us to have a clear mind and be vigilant. Unfortunately, many who profess Christ are simply unaware of the attacks of the enemy. Their minds are clouded and their vision is weak. God is showing us that Satan is real and that we must always be alert and watchful. In fact, on 20 different occasions in the New Testament we are commanded to be on the alert and be ready. **\*\*ILL:** I am confident that if you knew that someone was coming to your house tonight who meant your family harm, you would be ready. If you knew that harm was around the corner you would be watchful, alert, anticipating, and likely planning your next steps. Satan is far more dangerous than an intruder. Jesus summarized the devil's motives in **John 10:10a**, "**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.**" Satan is a dangerous enemy. He has great power and intelligence, and according to Ephesians 6:12 he has a host of demons who assist him in his attacks against God's people. If we are going to overcome the enemy and resist compromise, we must first be aware of the enemy's attack.

## **II. We Must be Anticipating the Enemy's Scheme (vs. 3-13)**

Please understand that this enemy couldn't change the fact that these were God's people. They couldn't take away the relationship that Joshua and the Israelites had with God. Nor could they change what God had already promised. They couldn't take any of the land from Israel because God had already promised it and His words are true. However, they could deceive the Israelites. They could rob them of some of the blessing that God intended for them. They could cause heartache and misery for the Israelites. Please understand the same is true today for believers. Satan can't have you because you belong to the Lord. He can't undo God's promises. However, he can rob you of your joy. He can make your life miserable. But Jesus came that we can have abundant life. In order for us to walk in that we must know the Lord personally, but we must also know some things about our enemy.

Any soldier knows that he doesn't just go into war. He prepares for the battle and task at hand. The soldiers of our country go through intense training to prepare themselves to be in the best position to be effective in the battle. As they prepare for conditions of war they do everything they can to make themselves ready for the battle. The purpose of this process is to make the soldier aware of many things: to make them aware of the environment, the enemy, the mission, the strategy, etc. Spiritually speaking, as Christian soldiers we must be aware of the enemy, but we must also be anticipating how the enemy will attack. In Joshua's case, he had faced many

soldiers with their swords and shields. He had also faced great city walls at Jericho and had been victorious. Because he knew that there were many more cities to conquer, I'm sure that he was anticipating that the attacks would all be by force, but this was not the case. The Gibeonites attacked the Israelites in the same way that Satan attacks us today. What are his schemes? What does he do?

### **A. The Enemy Deceives**

The Gibeonites attacked with deceit. We know today that Gibeon was located 25 miles from Gilgal, the headquarters for the Israelites. The Israelites had defeated Jericho, then Ai, and Gibeon was the next city they would face. So, the Gibeonites knew the Israelites were coming and they knew they had to do something in order to survive. So, they chose to deceive. In the same way, we must remember that Satan will use every means possible to defeat us. Like we've read in 1 Peter 5:8, sometimes he attacks us as a roaring lion, and at others he comes as a subtle, deceiving serpent. **F.B. Meyer** said it well, "It is in this way that we are tempted still: more by the schemes of Satan than by his open assaults, more by the deceitfulness of sin than by declared war."

Notice how the Gibeonites deceived. I believe if we will look closely we will find that Satan still deceives us in the same way.

**They appealed to man's sight.** The Bible says they acted craftily by taking worn-out sacks on their donkeys, worn-out wineskins, worn-out sandals on their feet, worn-out clothes on their backs, and old, dried bread. They did this to suggest one thing – that they had come from a great distance. In fact, they said clearly in verse 6, "We have come from a great distance." And, by sight this certainly seemed to be true, but it was all a lie. Satan still does the same in our lives today. Remember it was David who was on the rooftop of his house when he saw Bathsheba and that she was beautiful. From sight to lust, he convinced himself that he could sin and nobody would know about it. It is interesting to also note that when Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days He was tempted by Satan. The height of the temptation came in the third temptation when the Bible says that Satan "showed" Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. What was he doing? He was tempting Jesus through sight. Satan hasn't changed his methods. And for many men and women he is still appealing to the sight.

**They appealed to man's ears.** When asked about where they came from they began to explain in verse 9, "We came all this way because of the fame of the Lord your God. We have heard report of Him." They are suggesting that by partnering with Israel they want to worship their God. In other words, they are telling the leaders of Israel what they want to hear. They are appealing to their ears. These words were soothing and coaxing, but they were complete lies. Is this not what Satan did when he tempted Eve? He talked to her and said, "Eve, you aren't going to die for disobeying God. God knows that when you eat of it you will be like Him." He told her what she wanted to hear. It was then that the Bible says that she saw that the fruit of the tree was "desirable". It is interesting to note

that with man the deceit seems to begin with what he sees, but with woman the temptation seems to begin with what she hears.

**They appealed to man's pride.** Notice how they referred to themselves. In verse 11 they said, "We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us." IOW, "We are here for one reason – to serve you. We are not opposed to you. You are greater than us. We pose no risk to you. We want to serve you." Friends, the enemy always disguises himself as your servant. Satan went to Eve and said, "I tell you one thing God just doesn't want you to be as powerful as He is. I'm here to serve you and take care of you." But friend, the moment you buy in to that deceitful plan you make the devil your master. Can you imagine how Satan tempted David? "David, you're the most powerful man in the kingdom. You can have any woman you want, even the married Bathsheba. I know that God has called it adultery, but that's just too hard. That's not what He meant. He understands that you're just a man. David, I'm here to be your servant. You want her, just say the word and it'll be arranged." This was even his same attack against Jesus. In his third temptation against Jesus, he took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said to Him, "Jesus, I am here to serve You. I will give all this to You if You bow down and worship me." What was Jesus' response? He quoted Scripture and said, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and SERVE Him only.' " In other words, "Satan, you are a liar. You are no servant to Me. You want all glory and exaltation, but that belongs only to My Father." Satan was trying to tempt Jesus to go against the Father's plan by serving Himself, but Jesus refused the deception of the devil.

Friend, I beg you to hear me this morning. Satan is a liar. He'll paint a picture of gold, but it's fool's gold. Satan never gives you the full story. Jesus spoke of Satan in **John 8:44b** saying, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Truly the enemy deceives.

## **B. The Enemy Distracts**

Now, if we back away and get a broad angled view of this situation, we discover what else is happening here. In each situation up to this point, as they Israelites are nearing the next obstacle we see Joshua seeking the Lord for direction. However, in this situation the Gibeonites were the initiators. They initiated the contact and controlled the conversation. IOW, they had the attention of Joshua and the Israelites, when the attention of Joshua and the Israelites should have been focused on God. Remember God had already given his command to claim every city in the land and He had already given His promise that every place they went it would be given to them. So, why in the world were Joshua and Israelites standing around even considering this situation? This was like a magician's sleight of hand. They were busy keeping the attention of the Israelites so that Joshua wouldn't realize which was the next city they would face. Joshua was so distracted by this group and their appearance that he lost sight of the main thing. In fact, I get the impression from this passage that he was either busy or just simply impatient. Notice,

Joshua had a pause in his spirit. There was suspicion in verse 7-8. There was something in him that said these people aren't telling the truth. So, he asks a question in verse 8, "Who are you and where have you come from?" He asked a good question, but he didn't wait for a response. There were questions and suspicions in his heart, but he didn't take time to get an answer from God. The results of his question would haunt him the rest of his life, but that particular moment he wasn't interested in the Lord's speaking to him. **\*\*ILL: I've had a question mark in my life many times and let someone pressure me to make a decision and every time it turned out wrong and I've come to regret it.\*\*** Sometimes we, too, are distracted because we are too busy. The preachers of old used to say, "If the devil can't make you bad, he'll just make you busy." That is very true. Many believers are living their lives with no focus and no eternal impact because they are distracted but the hundreds of things that they are pursuing. Some are distracted simply because they are overwhelmed with all the various worries of life. Either way, Satan seeks to distract you so that you fail to grow and fail to be effective for Christ.

### **C. The Enemy Divides**

Again, what have we seen in the book of Joshua? When the Israelites were obeying God and trusting Him, they had harmony amongst themselves and they experienced miraculous victories. However, when the Israelites rejected God's plan and depended on their own ability, they experienced division and defeat. In this case, they were at a plan of unity and victory. But, now, they have listened to the lies of the enemy, they have been distracted by the enemy, and they have made a covenant with someone that God had clearly commanded them against. What was the result? Three days after they made this covenant with these people from a so-called distant land, they came to the city of Gibeon and discovered that they had actually made a covenant with the enemy. Verse 18 tells us what happened, "The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders." Because of their compromise they experienced division once again.

Brothers and sisters, this is the same thing that happens to us when we compromise with sin. This is what Jesus was speaking of in **Luke 22:31** when Jesus warned Peter saying, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." IOW: Jesus tells Peter, "Peter, Satan wants to hinder you and separate you from Me and the brethren." And, that's exactly what he did. Within a few short days, in a moment of fear and temptation, Peter denied the Lord three times. What happened? Peter ran away from the Lord and away from the brethren. And there, alone, he grieved and wept. Satan will do anything to hinder you from doing the main thing – knowing God and making Him known. He will do anything he can to discourage you from having unity with your brothers and sisters. He will do all that he can to discourage you from walking in victory. He doesn't want this church to keep growing. He doesn't want us to be serious about living for the Lord. Why? Because he knows that many will receive Christ as Savior and they will worship God. Satan wants to be worshiped. He wants to have his way. So, he

seeks to distract us from what God has called us to do. In **Galatians 5:7-8** Paul asks, “You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.” Friend, don’t think that you are above this. Satan wants to hinder you from the work and will of God. Even Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica in **1 Thessalonians 2:18**, “For we wanted to come you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan hindered us.” Friends, Satan is constantly seeking to deceive us, distract us, and discourage us. But, brothers and sisters in Christ, don’t lose heart in doing what is right. Don’t grow weary in well doing. We have victory in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

### III. We Must be Armed to Resist the Enemy (vs. 14-15)

In spite of all that had already gone wrong, I am convinced that Joshua and the Israelites wouldn’t have compromised if they had done this one thing. But, once again, they fell short in this area. At the city of Ai they had already learned that they couldn’t stand and be victorious in their own strength. At Ai they had failed to take time to seek the Lord and the end result was that they experienced a humiliating defeat and shame. They were repentant and they recommitted themselves to the Lord and the work and moved forward. But, once again when confronted with the Gibeonites, they were deceived, distracted, and self-reliant, so what did they do? Verse 14 tells us, “They did not ask for the counsel of the Lord.” They said, “God, we’ve got this. We can handle this on our own.” The result was that they made a major mistake. Why? Because they couldn’t do this on their own. They couldn’t defeat the enemy on their own. In fact, they couldn’t even make a wise decision on their own. They needed God, His help, His wisdom, and His strength.

As I conclude this message, I want to remind us that every one of us here today need the same things from God. The key to our victory, the key to resisting compromise isn’t found in our self-control or will-power. It isn’t found in vast knowledge or skills. It is found only in the Lord. Listen closely to **Ephesians 6:10-13**. Notice that the passage doesn’t say that the Christian soldier should depend on their own strength. Friend, it doesn’t matter how strong we are. We, of ourselves, are no match for the devil. Our strength isn’t found in man. Our strength is found in the Lord. We can be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that is available to us and working in us. Listen to **Ephesians 1:19-21**. Friend, that is the power that is working in us. He exhorts us, encourages us, and commands us as believers to be strong in the Lord. This is how we stand. Be strong in the Lord. Don’t be strong in your opinions. Don’t be strong in your experiences. Don’t be strong in your bank account, your career, or your knowledge. **BE STRONG IN THE LORD!** Mark it down, underline it, circle it, memorize it - only in the Lord and in the power of His might will we be victorious and overcome any and all attacks. If we are standing in the strength of the Lord, it doesn’t matter who may come against us. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

We are living in an evil day, yet we are to do all that is possible and stand for Him. We are to give no ground to Satan. After all we are not standing for the victory. We are not standing so that we can have victory over Satan. We stand, in Christ, having already experienced victory. Satan may rage and roar, but he is powerless over a child of God that is filled with the Spirit of God and is standing strong in the power of the Lord’s might.

Family, let's learn from the Israelites' mistake. Let's decide today that we will walk with the Lord and seek Him every step of the way. We must put on His armor daily and stand in His strength so that we can walk in victory and in complete devotion to Him.

You may wonder, "Well, pastor, I've already messed up big time. I've already compromised in several areas of my life. What can I do now?" Well, actually, you don't have to look too far to discover what to do. In fact, you can just keep reading the rest of the book of Joshua. The Israelites had made a colossal mistake and were soon confronted with the result of it. However, because the covenant was made in the name of God they honored their covenant. They put God first and followed His will instead of their own. When that happened, God turned their mistake into a masterpiece. Remember those other people groups that wanted to gang up against Israel? Well, they got mad at Gibeon and decided to attack them instead. Because Israel was honoring the name of God, they came to Gibeon's defense. And in one battle the Israelites defeated every major king and enemy at one time. In other words, what Satan meant for bad against Israel, once Israel got right with God, God used it for good and He gave an overwhelming victory. And the best part was that God got all the glory. Friend, I don't know what mistakes you've made. I don't know what bad decisions you're still holding onto. But I do know that when we get honest with God, honest with ourselves, and honest with others God uses that in our lives to turn our mistakes into masterpieces. Won't you trust Him to do that in your life today?