

Meditations on the Book of Joshua

Joshua 10

The Victory of Gibeon

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THE VICTORY OF GIBEON

Before entering upon this new subject, I should like to make one or two incidental remarks.

The more I ponder these chapters of Joshua, the more I am struck with the part Satan plays in them. He combines circumstances to attain his end, and in this way he gets hold of people unknown to themselves; his suggestions are mistaken for those of their own free will, and, alas, he too often attains his end by making use even of the children of God who have been foolish enough to listen to him. Amidst all this show of activity, he hides himself, and nothing unusual causes his presence even to be suspected; in short, he is so little to be seen, that his very existence is denied by the world. What part has he in such a natural course of events, as the ambition, the disputes or the contests of two nations?

And, after all, who is right in this struggle? Whose is the good cause? Which is the aggressor? Where is a spirit of cruelty and extermination to be seen? and who lays snares? Let us weigh the facts fairly and decide.

I listen, and consider, and I decide for the Canaanites against Israel, for Satan against God. The enemy has succeeded by the facts themselves in hiding God from me. The word, on the contrary, reveals God to me, makes Him known to me in His fulness in Christ, bringing, in His Person, perfect goodness, truth, light, righteousness, and holiness. Thus Satan is exposed; his schemes and artifices are seen in broad daylight; and the soul, knowing God, has no longer any difficulty in judging between good and evil in this world; all things are made manifest by the light.

But Satan does not consider himself beaten. To deceive souls, he attacks the very ones who are standing for God and bearing witness for Him; and having succeeded in corrupting them, he says: Are these people any better than others? They may talk about separation and humility, but look at Achan and the Gibeonites; see their self-confidence and their spiritual pride. These arguments gain entrance into souls, and the enemy succeeds in inducing them to reject God.

In connection with this I would further remark, that Satan has two grand methods of corrupting God's children. The first of these is the accursed thing, the world allowed in the heart. But this being judged, and the soul humbled, Satan will not be defeated. His second method is the league with Gibeon, the world allowed in the walk.

Throughout our Christian course we have to watch against these two snares, and again and again the twofold question arises in our hearts: Is

the Lord enough for me, or shall I allow the attractions which the world offers me? Is it possible for us to be Christians, nothing but Christians in our walk; to be completely separate from the world, even the religious world, to be on no terms with it, and to avoid every association with it? Satan has perfectly succeeded, and succeeds every day, by means of these two snares, in enticing God's redeemed people. The first fall in the church was by means of the accursed thing, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, quickly followed by alliance with the world. If we take only the principles of this alliance, they showed themselves in the lifetime of the apostle, and are denounced by him in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. They would like to have gained the wise, in order that Christianity might triumph. Their motives were of the world and carnal, similar to those of Gibeon in the midst of the congregation.

Well, Israel have owned their failure with regard to Gibeon, have confessed it by their acts, and must bear the lasting shame of it, approved of God in so doing, as we have seen. But Satan has not exhausted his artifices. We see a new confederation of kings assembled together, and this time arrayed not against Israel, but against Gibeon. The men of Gibeon send to Joshua to Gilgal saying: "Slack not thy hand from thy servants." What is Israel to do? Danger is there, whatever course he pursues. Not to go up, and to allow the Gibeonites to be cut to pieces by others, would deliver them from the consequences of their failure, but where would be the needed humiliation? Would it be upright towards God or man? To go up, on the other hand, would look like a definite allowance of association with the world. Such dilemmas are common with Satan. How many times he placed them in the pathway of the perfect Man! The only way to get out of the difficulty is by simple dependence on God, realised in the school of Gilgal. The lesson of the snare of Gibeon is learnt, and Satan is foiled.

Still, as we have already seen in the course of these chapters, Israel's safety does not consist in the mere fact of being at Gilgal. The Gibeonites found Joshua and the men of Israel at the camp at Gilgal (Joshua: 9: 6) when they went up to lay the snare, the result of which we have seen. That which so often is lacking, is the practical application of the cross of Christ to all the details of life in the flesh. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." It is not enough to be at Gilgal (Joshua 10: 6), but there must be also the going up from Gilgal (verse 7), and the return to Gilgal (v. 15). Circumcision and Gilgal are inseparable; the first is not sufficient of itself to keep us from falling; and Gilgal without circumcision would be monasticism, for the natural man can find satisfaction in it. (Col. 2: 20-23)