

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE TEXT

Before noting the particular lessons of our text regarding God's redeeming of His people's failures we observe certain general lessons. First, from v.16, we see that God does not allow His people to be long imposed upon-"And it came to pass at the end of three days..." Only for three days does God allow His people to be deceived.

Further, from those same words it has been suggested that there is an intimation that the leaders of the people of God are back on resurrection ground ("three days"). Certainly, we see, that Joshua and the leaders are once again thinking in a spiritual manner and not merely in a natural way. This may be seen in three things: 1.) They FULFILL the oath they made to the Gibeonites, even though it was obtained through deceit (v.18-19) 2.) The FEAR of the Lord is upon them (V.20) and 3.) They are FAITHFUL to persevere in the keeping of their oath despite the people's murmuring against them concerning it (v.18-20).

Another matter of interest and importance is the response the Gibeonites give after being confronted by Joshua concerning their deceit (v. 24-25). Note, they do not attempt to hide or deny what they have done but rather, openly CONFESS their action. Further, they explain their action in terms of what they had heard concerning God's promise and command to Moses to give Israel the land and to destroy all the inhabitants in it. In recounting this they show that they are CONVINCED that God will bring to pass what He has promised and commanded His people. Finally, they CAST themselves upon Joshua to do unto them "as it seemeth good and right..." In the action of the Gibeonites we see a picture of how sinful man should come to God; 1.) CONFESSING sin (repentance), 2.) CONVINCED of God's word (believing) and 3.) CASTING oneself upon God for mercy and grace in Christ (of whom Joshua is a type). In this action of the Gibeonites I am reminded of a sermon by Jonathan Edwards on the need for sinners to seek God to be saved and not to think that because God is sovereign in the matter of salvation that there is nothing they can or should do. The title of that sermon was, "A POSSIBILITY OF BEING SAVED IS BETTER THAN A CERTAINTY OF BEING DAMNED." In that message Edwards argued that it is certain that a person will be damned if he does not seek God for salvation and that it is possible, if not probable, that a person will be saved if they seek God for salvation. May we who hold strongly to the tenants of the Reformed faith be encouraged to instruct and call the lost to seek God for salvation. May we, as Paul in Acts 20:21, call the sinners to, "...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

PARTICULAR LESSONS REGARDING GOD'S REDEEMING OF HIS PEOPLE'S FAILURES

The particular lessons we see in our text regarding God's redeeming of His peoples failure are:

I. God Redeems The Failures Of His People. (V.21,27)

God takes our mistakes and turns into advantages.

II. God's Redemption Of His People's Failures Does Not Mean Exclusion From All Consequences. (v.18)

God allowed there to be dissension among the people toward Joshua and the princes for their action. Though we find forgiveness from God in Christ for our failures and are recovered from them that does not mean we will be exempt from all consequences. Often, God will have us eat of the fruits of our folly.

III. God's Redemption Of Our Failures Does Mean That He Will Take Our Failures And Use Them For His Purpose And Our Good. (v. 21,27)

The Gibeonites became hewers of wood and drawers of water for both the altar of the Lord and the people of the Lord. God took His people's mistake and used it for His purpose and His people's benefit. Likewise, Paul instructs and reminds us in Romans 8:28 that, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." In verse 29 of Romans 8 Paul tells us what that good and God's purpose is; "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Conformity to the image of Christ is both God's purpose and our good and God works all, including our failures, to that end.

IV. Ultimately, We Are To See And Understand Our Failures And God's Redemption Of Them As Part Of His Sovereign Plan. (11:19-20)

In Joshua 11:19-20 we are told that only the inhabitants of Gibeon "made peace with the children of Israel..." Concerning the others we are told, "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly..." The failure of Joshua and the princes, for which they were responsible, and God's redemption of it, is seen in these verses to have been part of God's sovereign plan. Likewise, we are to understand our failures and God's redemption of them as part of His sovereign plan. This does not excuse our failure but neither does it exclude God's sovereignty. Though God does not cause us to sin neither is our sin apart from Him.

In conclusion, may we recognize that we all have Gibeonites in our lives. We all have those relationships, alliances, unions which should not be but are. May we like Joshua and the princes in Israel, 1.) FULFILL our word, 2.) FEAR the Lord, and 3.) FAITHFULLY persevere in doing right respecting them.

Further, may we realize that we all come into this life and world as spiritual Gibeonites, deserving of judgment and destruction. That all of us, in that which is most important in life, our relationship to God, are sinners, failures. May we, like those Gibeonites of whom we read in the text, seek to make peace with God, seek Him for salvation, coming to Him in repentance (CONFESSION of our sin), coming to Him in faith (CONVINCED of the promises of His word) and CASTING ourselves upon His mercy and grace that is found in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.