

Joshua 9:1-19 – I Pity the Fool who lives by Sight
Tom Gooding – 18 August 13

The Israelites have crossed the Jordan, dealt with Achan's sin, defeated Jericho and Ai and renewed the Covenant. They have seen God working in huge and powerful ways, yet we now see how they still slip and rely on themselves (v14) "but they did not enquire of the Lord" (NIV), ask counsel (ESV) or didn't ask God about it (Message).

Joshua 9:1-19

1. They lived by sight and not by faith

Not the first time – Achan lived by sight; saw the treasure and wanted it, didn't live by faith & keep God's command.

Now – Israelites saw disguised Gibeonites and with a small amount of evidence made an oath with them. They trusted their own judgement over God's.

Success can often lead to overconfidence. They succeeded before and so believed themselves able to decide, without consulting God. We can do this with habitual sin – if it's been going well for a while, we can become overconfident and not recognise that it's God working in and through us. (We start to live by sight, not faith, again).

Proverbs 12:15 – The way of the fool seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Living by sight is the way of the fool, but living by faith is asking God to lead us and remembering to talk to Him.

I'm not saying that we need to get over spiritual and ask God which pair of socks to wear – we have common sense!

But remember that He cares for you! He knows you by name, he wants to be involved in the decisions over your life – job, relationships, money, where you will live...Jeremiah 29:11, Proverbs 3:5-7, Luke 7:12, Psalm 139:13-17.

2. They didn't see the consequences (v7-8)

v7 – The Israelites said to the Hivites, 'But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?'

They had remembered what God had commanded – to wipe out all the people who were in the promised lands. So they knew that they couldn't make a treaty with them if they lived nearby. But, they still seemed to make the oath quickly, without asking God, and without considering the consequences.

This is classic human nature – how often do you read the Terms & Conditions of anything you sign? What could you be signing away? We can be quick to agree when it appears that we could benefit from the outcome.

Simple decisions can have big consequences. Setting up a treaty with a foreign people group is still a big decision, but it's a basic yes / no question – it was simple. However, when the rest of the Israelites found out, (v18) the congregation was up in arms over their leaders' decision.

We are called to be wise, approaching decisions with careful judgement and with God. He generally won't bash down our walls and tell us what to do, but if we ask Him then He delights to tell us, for he knows the plans for us!

3. They didn't recognise the enemy (v9-14)

The aim of the Gibeonites was to trick the Israelites – mouldy food, old clothes, worn out wineskins, telling lies.

We won't have a group of travellers from afar turning up on our doorstep, but our enemy won't be dressed all in red with a pitchfork, horns and a big neon sign saying "ENEMY". It is important for us as Christians to remember that we do have an enemy and "he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:18).

John 8:44, Ephesians 6:12 – our battle is a spiritual one, I have never seen the 'powers of darkness' or 'the spiritual forces of evil' so I need to live by faith in God, not by sight.

We do have a spiritual enemy BUT he has been defeated by Jesus on the cross and we live in that victory. Therefore we can be confident that God is able to help us and that we won't be fooled by the attacks of the enemy.

Living by faith – the quick 'how to' guide

Ephesians 6: 13-18. Therefore put on the full armour of God:

- belt of truth around your waist, breastplate of righteousness in place, feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit - which is the word of God.
 - The Word of God – the bible is our offensive weapon, it enables us to fight the attacks of the enemy and keep our eyes fixed on God. It strengthens and sustains us. It gives us wisdom and hope. This is one of the ways we can get deposits of faith for our situation and our lives.
 - Prayer – Paul tells us to pray on all occasions and keep praying for all the Lord's people. Prayer is vital. Talking and listening to God – it's a 2-way relationship, like any conversations are. God has told us to pray to Him and throughout history we can see and know that He is a God who hears and answers our prayers.

- Put on the armour – Spiritual coat of armour. By living in step with the Holy Spirit. He is our righteousness and reminds us that we are children of God. He declares truth in our lives and gives us peace. Through Him we can hold that shield of faith up against the lies of the enemy.

He makes it simple for us – He wants everyone to be able to live by faith – a life of freedom, joy, purpose and victory! I am not saying it's easy but it is whole heartedly worth it! Let's not fall into the easy trap of living by sight, like the Israelites, but let us be aware of the spiritual warfare we are involved with and continue to live by faith. Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.