

# The enemy of God's people

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn this evening to the Old Testament, to our study in the book of Joshua, and to follow on where we left off last week, and hopefully to complete what we started in last week.

I don't know what on earth happened last Sunday night, but we certainly didn't get through all I thought we would get through. And you say to yourself, well I'd give them a good start for this evening, and you're right.

But yet, a lot more seems to be in this section that we were looking at, than perhaps I give credence for at the outset of our study.

But just to remind ourselves of where it is we are, and what it is we're looking at this evening. It's in chapter 9 of Joshua, and we're looking at the first two or three verses in particular.

Particularly the first two, where we read, And it came to pass, when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the great sea towards Lebanon, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite heard of it.

[ 1 : 23 ] They gathered together to fight with Joshua, and Israel with one accord. When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard that Joshua had gone to Jericho, and I, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors.

These verses this evening. Now I mentioned to you last week that the Christian life, although an absolutely glorious life, is a life that is in a sense lived on a battlefield.

It's a life that's a warfare. It's a life that on many occasions, on many days, is anything but easy. And we noticed why the Christian life is a warfare.

Because there is a war raging between two great seeds, as someone has described it. There is a war raging between God and the principle of truth and light, holiness, justice, and Satan himself, who stands for everything that's contrary, who stands for everything that is unlike God, everything that is against God.

And the moment a man or woman, boy or girl, becomes a Christian, they enter into this warfare. And they enter into it of necessity, because they've opted out, they've moved out, they've shifted ranks.

[ 3 : 07 ] That is, they're no longer walking or living or existing on the side of darkness, on the side of hostility to God, on the side of ignorance.

They have shifted camps, they have moved positions, to live, to glorify God for which they were made in the first place. But because sin has entered into life and into human experience, they were once unable to do so.

And having shifted ranks, having moved camps, they've entered into the conflict. And this conflict, for the Christian as an individual, and for the church as a body, is so absolutely potent and real, that that's our first comment.

That the enemy isn't something intangible. It's not something you don't know about. It's not something you can't put your finger on.

The enemy is very real. It is absolutely real. And we noticed how this truth is brought home. In the first verse of chapter 9, where it says of all these nations of Canaan, that they came together, joined a confederacy, to fight against the land of Israel, the people of Israel, to fight against their moving into the land of promise, and their possession of that land which God had committed to give them, a way back with Abraham.

[ 4 : 53 ] But we noticed last week also, that they weren't just a very real enemy, in the sense that they all came together in a confederacy. We noticed that they were also a very informed enemy.

They weren't ignorant. Because they came together, we read, when they heard of it. When they heard of all the dealings of God with that nation in previous generations and years. And in particular, in this context here, when they'd heard of what Joshua and the people had done on Mount Hebo and Gerizim.

When Joshua had carved out the divine law and presented that law to the people as either life or death, the opportunity of life or death.

Namely through their obedience or disobedience. And this people, when they'd heard of this law and the demands of this God through His law, they were not wanting this God or His law to have any response, to have any place in their lives or any prerogative over them.

[ 6 : 05 ] And so they said, no, we can't have it. And thus they came out an informed enemy as well as a very real enemy. And we noticed as we looked at that last week, how it challenges the church in 1986 to recognize that it is against a very real foe and equally a very informed foe.

And we don't need to go into great detail this evening in recapping this. But surely it demands of us just as the world comes at the people of God with great ferocity and with great voice and with great power.

How much more ought the church this evening and in this generation to face that same hostile real enemy with the same kind of offensive, come at it with the same potency but more because it has greater power.

Come at it with all its knowledge because it has more knowledge. Come at it with its wisdom because it has more wisdom. But we notice that the church isn't doing that.

Yes, it's doing it in certain quarters. And we praise God for that. But in our own doorstep, we challenge ourselves because we're simply not doing enough.

[ 7 : 31 ] The state of the Christian church in Middergiel is, to say the least, very vulnerable. And therefore it needs, in Middergiel, the church to come off the walls.

It needs the church to rise up. It needs the church to take initiative. It needs the church to face the same enemy that the central region faces, that Russia faces, that the South African church faces. It needs to come out and to come out fighting. It needs to stop busying itself with all the non-essentials. It needs to stop pitter-pattering about the things that are totally unimportant in the light of eternity.

And it needs to come out as an army that is equipped with all the weaponry of God and face the enemy with the same kind of offensive as the world the enemy faces the church with.

Because as we noticed last week, the world that doesn't want anything to do with God that is law is a world that isn't ashamed to tell you that it doesn't want anything to do with God.

[ 8 : 46 ] It's never a shame to tell you where to put your message, where to put your truth, where to put your Christ, where to put your cross.

It's never slow to tell you where you can put your Christian standards. It's never slow to tell you that you're wrong in pushing a strong evangelistic Christian message.

And why is it not ashamed to tell the church in 1986 what it ought and ought not to do? It's simply not ashamed to do that because it is blinded.

And it is blinded by the prince of this world. And it believes all that the prince of this world is telling. It believes that there is no real God in the heavens that's going to punish.

It believes that there is no real judgment to face. It believes that there is in a sense no necessity at all for man or woman, boy or girl to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith.

[ 9 : 53 ] There is no reality in all this Christian message. And all that's important is that man lives and man does what pleases man.

Man eats, drinks and be merry because tomorrow he dies. And this vacuum which is a vacuum created by the prince of this world this fallacy which is a fallacy conjured by the prince of this world is what makes the enemy of the church and the enemy of your soul this evening so very real so very antagonistic so difficult to reach with the gospel and makes the reality of small congregations struggling ministries difficulties facing congregations all the more pertinent but that doesn't allow us to sit back to nothing because if that's the offensive of the world if that's the line of attack that the confederacy of this world is bringing against the church doesn't it need the church to face that enemy with such positive positive offensive and positive evangelism but let us look more into what is here before us and see something of the cunning of the enemy also because you notice that Satan is a very cunning enemy he doesn't always come like a roaring lion so that you can see him

and you can hear him before he comes he's as subtle he's as subtle as the serpent he's cunning and that is always in the reality of his aim at work throughout every generation of church history just as we can say

God is never stereotyped in his dealings with man equally we can say Satan is never stereotyped in the way that he attacks the Christian church he'll meet me one day with someone who will tell me to my face what they think of me and what they think of the gospel and what they think of Christ and you know I have a great deal of time for the man who's like that a great deal of time for the woman who's like that because at least they're honest but he'll come to me on other occasions as he comes to you and he'll come with all the subtlety of a serpent winding his way into your heart getting into your situation getting into your mind in such varied and subtle ways that before you realize it the enemy's in and the enemy's there and the enemy's got you against the wall he's got you humbled he's got you humiliated even before you've had a chance to find him to attack him and so we notice that the enemy's not just real it's not only informed it's so subtle as it came at Bethlehem we recalled last week in the form of open antagonism it came in the form of blatant lionistic attack if we can use that term but when it came in the temptations in the wilderness did it not come with all the subtlety of a serpent with all the cunning of someone seeking whatever means possible to gain victory and here in with the people of Israel the enemy not only comes in this great massive united front by the nations of the Hivites the Amorites and so on but he comes with the cunning of the Gibeonites they've come up because they've decided that open attack is not the best way to save their lives they come up as representatives as so called pretended ambassadors in order to gain an alliance with the nation of Israel and thus to save their skins and to save their people and what happens when they come up they come up with pretense or they come up with wonderful qualifications they come up they tell us seeking an alliance seeking peaceful negotiations seeking peaceful existence and more than that they come up saying we're from a very far country and we've come because of the name of the Lord your God before we have heard of his fame and all that he did in Egypt in verse 9 their qualifications were good they wanted peaceful means in order to gain this alliance with Israel and they also came up with this great great front that was

Winslow that they were on the Lord's side that they were numbered among his people that they were fighting the same cause as Israel that they were won and won by the God Jehovah they were coming and we notice here some salutary reminders of lessons that we need to learn in the Christian church because as the enemy is so real and sometimes so obvious he comes and he gets us on many occasions more often than not when we think we're strong and here in Israel's case were they not experienced they weren't novices they were experienced in dealing with God and in God's dealings with them and they ought to have known better they ought to have been more prepared they ought to have been more careful they ought to have been wiser but they thought they were strong and what happens along comes the enemy in this very subtle manner and they gain victory they come along proposing a line and thus an alliance is made with but what's the lesson there well the lessons are so obvious the enemy comes to us this evening he's perhaps come to you in the past week he's come up with that quiet voice with that gentle touch and he's spoken to you as you've been harassed he says to you perhaps you're pushing yourself too hard what's the point of burning yourself out who's interested who's going to worry who's going to be concerned he's come to you perhaps in the past week and he said concerning your principles he says perhaps you're too narrow you're too bigoted you're never going to win people with that kind of line that kind of approach he's come with all that kind of soft oozing winsome kind of approach so subtle but perhaps more so he's come in the past week with the kind of approach that the

Gibeonites came with this line of alliance make an alliance make friends make peace and all will be well well this evening we could look at this for a long time at the question of alliance at the subtlety so often of alliance as it's used by Satan as he seeks to thwart the work of the gospel and undermine the cause of the gospel in this generation many ways we could look at it but let's just consider one or two how many people could we look at this evening known to us in a very real way some of them intimately known to us who have entered into relationships that they ought never have entered into in the first place now I'm not talking about a man or a woman that has perhaps got married and in the process of that marriage found themselves constrained by the love of [18:20] God to embrace Christ and thus in the marriage you have a Christian and you have a non-Christian that's a totally separate domestic situation and a situation that the word of God does great concern for and great advice for but this particular situation that is before us is an alliance where the parties know that it is something they ought not to engage in and how many of our friends

even how many of ourselves have entered into relationships where we know we ought not to be and I could take you to many men this evening I could take you to women this evening who in the process of time girl met boy boy met girl and the face was always acceptable the features were always lovely the qualifications always seemed so glorious and they entered into a relationship that was not just platonic but a relationship that ultimately ended in marriage and that marriage bond wasn't long in existence when boy found out that girl was not all she really was cut out to be she was not the lover of Jesus that she seemed to be in the days of courtship and girl finds out that boy was not the boy that she thought he was as he worked with a youth fellowship as he worked with a church in evangelism as he did his duty week by week in the congregation and there have been many many disastrous marriages

Christian marriages so called whereby your girl has entered into relationship and entered into marriage because Satan has come with all the cunning and said this is a great alliance this is a great relationship and there are many Christian marriages this evening that are anything but happy that are anything but joyous because they were marriages that were brought about on one hand through the cunning of Satan deceiving the individual's concern and we must have great pity and we must have lots of compassion for individuals boy girl in such a predicament because it's one of sadness marriage is a wonderful thing it's an absolutely beautiful thing and Christian marriage in the ideal context is equally so in fact marriage in the total sense in the ideal sense is best seen in the Christian context but isn't it a case that so many are anything but ideal and it's so often the case because of alliances made that ought not to be made how many business men do we know this evening or business ladies we mustn't forget the ladies but we know plenty surely who entered into alliance in business contract when their conscience told them that they ought not to but yet they did and these alliances have so compromised their positions so compromised their lives that their lives are anything but full and anything but real and anything but dynamic we look at it in respect to church membership how many men and women have entered into alliance with the church and the church has entered into alliance with them in the form of church membership on the word or the vow or the acknowledgement that there was love of God just like the Gibeonites we have come because of the name of the

Lord your God because we have heard of his fame and all that he did in Egypt and how many have come to Kirk Sessions how many have come to pastors come to them seeking membership in the church and it's not long into the relationship into the alliance when it's discovered sadly sadly all too often that that alliance was not genuine that commitment wasn't real because there's no real love of the saviour there in the first place when the church speaks of evangelism there's no getting up and go to do anything about evangelism when the church desires to pray there is no keenness to pray when the church is decided to make known the gospel of Christ to the community there is no concern for the lost and for the needy no compassion that a men and women are facing a lost eternity all that's concerned in church membership in such a case and which is absolutely disastrous as an alliance is respectability is keeping face is looking the part well the church is not about the business of respectability and is not about the business of keeping up the face it's about the business of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of

Christ to a world that is dying in sin and needs saving fast and therefore the church needs constantly to be careful at this area and more than that we as individuals need to be careful in our alliances business alliances relationship alliances and we can go on can we into many other areas many other areas that would show us how cunning and how subtle he uses this feature this area to wheel his way into the very heart of the church and instead of being of benefit to the church weakens the church undermines its testimony spoils its influence and we can say we could even look at it if we wanted to and respect it to church relations there is a great cry today that what's important and what's going to solve the crisis of the church is that we start all getting together holding hands in order to do the work that we're all engaged in and we're always hearing the comment that we're all engaged in the same work whether we be of the

[ 25 : 01 ] Christian faith even and of the non-Christian faith what absolute nonsense but that alliance is a very real alliance that is proposed so cunningly to the Christian church this evening now I know right across the board that the church is too fragmented the church is too split apart the church is too too splintered it is too too small and there are far far too many divisions but we must be very careful in our desire for church union and our desire for ecumenical relations we must be very careful that that alliance is not made to the detriment of the glory of God or to the detriment of

his truth as revealed in the scriptures because we're not all about the same business even although we may all have the label religious and all of the label even ministers of the gospel we're not all about the same business we have to watch because the enemy is cunning the enemy is subtle and he comes with many varied ways at your soul and when he's got you so often he's got you good and well he comes at the church so often with his face of alliance and we must be very careful but one other feature we notice here is that the victory is sometimes very painful also and not just painful it's very real we're often beaten we're often caught out we're often ensnared and why do we say that well we say it because the

Gibeonites got their way they came up not with all the razzabitz of warfare as the other nations were going to come with they come up with a quiet pretended role of ambassadors and what happens it happens in verse 14 that the men of Israel took some of their provisions and the Gibeonites had their way the Gibeonites won they won because we read that Israel did not ask counsel did not ask counsel of the Lord their God now isn't it a fact that we're in this warfare and isn't it also a fact that constantly we're beaten constantly we're caught out no matter how often we're on our guard we're constantly caught maybe not so much caught by the open onslaught but caught so often by the cunning attack and we're caught because we failed to be dependent upon God we failed to look to him we failed to trust him we failed to rest 100% upon him and there's a great lesson here for us because surely you would have felt that Israel would have learned their lesson by now did they not fail for the first time as they confronted I they failed because of their pride they failed because of their neglect of prayer and yet what happens God favours them God restores them and bang they're down again right when they ought not to be they're down now with the Gibeonites and they're down because they went careful it shows how slow we are to learn and it shows how easily we're knocked off our pedestals we look at Peter's experience and what was it that caused Peter's denial of his Lord in the temple it was purely cowardice that caused him to deny Jesus when he ought to have been acknowledging him and Peter knew he denied him you remember because of the great sorrow that resulted and it must have been not long after Peter was restored to favor and that denial forgiven that Peter would have said to himself I'll never be caught by that one again and I'll never be involved in that kind of problem again I've learned my lesson that time but the enemy my friends is so absolutely real that you can never take it for granted that perhaps because you've fallen once and learned a lesson and come back again that he'll never get you a second time because it's not many more weeks after the denial of Jesus in the temple court that you'll find the same Peter doing the same thing or in a similar way to the Gentile Christians at Antioch because down from Jerusalem comes Jewish Christians and Peter's ashamed to be seen identifying with the Gentile Christians what are these Jewish men going to think I'd better get out of here and thus you notice in the letter to the Galatians that Peter distances himself from those fellow believers among the Gentiles because of fear of what the Jewish Christians are going to say concerning his attitude Peter thought he'd learn but Peter was caught again he was beaten the time has gone and I want us to conclude this and I want us to conclude in a very positive note because this same chapter concludes in a positive note it concludes by telling us and I don't know if the words in the English dictionary are not but it concludes by telling us that the enemy there is a beatability to the enemy they're suspect they're vulnerable they're beatable how am I able to say that well I'm able to say it on many for many reasons but you notice here that so the Gibeonites did indeed succeed in their plan you notice that God overrode the failure and the mistakes of Israel and this evening I want us to leave on this note because I believe far too many of us not just here in this congregation but far too many of us in the presbytery of Lohabar and Argyl in the churches of this peninsula in the congregations up and down our land [ 31 : 33 ] I believe far too many of us as Christians are living negatively we're living as defeatists we're living as people that believe we will never win and there is no use in trying winning and that's a very subtle attack it's a very subtle deceit that I want us to get completely out of our minds because not only did God with the Gibeonites cause this thing to be redressed which had happened and turn it out for his good and for the glory of Israel but he will do exactly the same thing with you you might be beaten this evening you might feel that you've been attacked and Satan is saying to you I've got you and you'll never recover well look at this chapter and see what God did with the Gibeonites yes he made them woodcutters he made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation of Israel he turned what was wrong into good because Israel admitted that they'd done wrong they'd repented of the error and he forgave them he restored them he brought them

back to a place of usefulness and that's what we've got to get into our heads as Christian ministers as Christians in all our congregations we've got to get it into our heads that the enemy no matter how volatile and no matter how informed no matter how dynamic it may seem it is a beatable enemy and it's a beatable enemy because the

Christian is a winner you know we fail to grasp that truth we fail to live with the dynamic of that truth in our experience that we are overcomers in Jesus Christ we are winners in Jesus Christ we are more than conquerors through him who loved us and gave himself for us but the pathetic situation in the church the pathetic plight to the pulpit is that we don't believe we're winners Paul says to the Romans overcome evil with good what's that got to do with what we're talking about this evening well these words are words of hope and they are words of courage and they are words that are telling us that there is always the potential and the possibility of victory for the Christian church the Christian church is a winner this evening and it will never lose so the gates of hell rise up against it it is absolutely secure it is absolutely stable it will not crumble no matter what comes up against it no matter what form no matter what manner of attack the enemy will approach it with let it be known and let us always remember that it will never be quenched and we will never be beaten you call go back to that letter that we read in Ephesians and go back and look at why it will never be beaten because as Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians in chapter 10 at verse 5 verse 4 he says the weapons of our warfare they're not carnal we're in a warfare Paul knows he's in a warfare but he says the weapons of our warfare they're not carnal the weapons of our church this evening they're not carnal and they're not secularization they're not gimmicks they're nothing of these things the answers to the enemy this evening

Paul tells us are absolutely mighty in God for pulling down strongholds what are they what are the weaponry well the weaponry are those which he makes mention of in the Ephesian letter faith salvation the spirit of God the word of God faith these are the weapons that makes the Christian church invincible and we need to take up these weapons we need to put on these weapons we need to live with these weapons now the great giant of the Philistines he wasn't beaten by all the shining armory of Israel was he no he was never beaten by those men no matter how many men Saul would have put out with sword with spear with cannon even the giant would have still won the day the great man of the Philistines would have won when God went out with his weaponry the Philistine giant did fall the enemy of this world the enemy of the church this evening is an enemy that will know it's in a warfare when we rise up with a weaponry of warfare that is why in hell this evening that is why Satan this evening that is why the forces of evil this evening cringe at the thought of a dynamic church with this kind of weaponry because it can't stand against it can't stand against truth it can't stand against mighty faith

David proved that it can't stand against the workings of his spirit nor can it stand against the power of its gospel are we using these weapons is this church equipped with these weapons is the warfare that we're in the midst of being fought with our hands or with the weapons that Paul has just mentioned we're being fought with our hands with our wisdom with our gimmicks with our secularization we will be in for a great hiding and we will be forever in retreat but if we start putting on the helmet of salvation the breastplate of faith the sword of the spirit then we will not be running we will be making glorious advance the enemy will be coming yes the enemy will be coming not as our attacker but will be coming as our captain may God help us help us to be the kind of dynamic church that God wants us to be in 1986 that is not against the wall doing nothing but that is in the world producing and projecting and moving forward with all the glory of the gospel concerning [ 39 : 02 ] Jesus Christ may God help us to come to the place where Paul came to when writing to Timothy what was his closing words to Timothy I have fought a good fight I have run a good race that is now laid up for me a great prize may it be that we are able to come in the end of the day after we have fought to be able to say we have fought well Amen let us pray bless your word to us oh God and help us to apply its lessons to our lives for Jesus sake Amen Amen thank you wash know andek way to vide love important to ■ let me like to see

I can show you see theints the can on