

Making the Best of Past Mistakes

Joshua 9:16-27

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, July 9th 2023

I. Introduction — Cringing over past mistakes

Some of you said that you could really identify with last week's message about having the wool pulled over our eyes. And you shared some of your own stories. I think most of us could do that. Most of us have had the experience of cringing over past mistakes. Maybe we have made a horrible investment mistake that lost us a lot of money and we feel sick about it, but there's not much we can do. Or in other ways we have been sucked into making a stupid decision. While it is good to repent of our failures in the past, this passage shows us how God (along with the pain - and the pain will be there) *can still bring good out of our past failures*. This is the amazing thing about God's gracious sovereignty. In fact, to me that is the most encouraging part of this whole story.

Just to review, the Gibeonites used a number of techniques to pressure the Israelite leaders into making a covenant with them. They had no idea that these Gibeonites were Canaanites. And once they discovered who they really were, the leaders felt like they were now in a no-win situation. They believed that they were bound by the covenant that they had made with the Gibeonites but the people wanted to treat the covenant as null and void since it had been entered on false pretenses. And you could see how both sides felt like they were in the right. So it was a tough conundrum for the leaders to navigate.

Christians today have disobeyed the Lord by marrying an unbeliever, and now that the marriage is a mess, they want out. And they rationalize that they shouldn't have been married to an unbeliever in the first place. But Paul tells them, "No. You need to honor God by sticking with your marriage covenant and make the best of a bad situation. Trust God's power to overcome. It can." And God sometimes does overcome and produces conversion and a beautiful marriage. But even during those times that He does not, others can sometimes be drawn to the Lord by witnessing the integrity of the believer. We live in a time when integrity is so rare that it blows people away when they see Christians doing the right thing even when it costs them dearly. But even when others don't notice, the person himself or herself can be drawn to the Lord through his past mistakes. So this whole sermon is on how to profit from our mistakes and how to maintain integrity even after you have blown it big time.

II. We usually eventually find out that we were deceived (v. 16)

Verse 16 says, "And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them." They suddenly realize that they have unwittingly violated God's Word and have made a mess - an

unfixable mess. We will see in verse 18 that the Israelite citizens get very upset with the elders, and rightfully so.

Our own session experienced that at the beginning of Covid-19. We believed the government lies that there was going to be a massive death rate if we did not quarantine. So, since the Bible does call for quarantine, we reluctantly closed the church doors and streamed. It was a bad decision and we discovered fairly quickly that it was. And people were rightly upset with us. Biblical quarantine is for *sick* people, not the people who were well. So we repented and opened things up again. I think we handled things the way this chapter calls us to, but it was painful. We lost families over it. But we learned and I think the church learned through all of this as well.

III. It's good to confront the deceivers (v. 17)

Though we took responsibility for our bad decision, we *did* confront the propaganda machine that was spreading false information just as Joshua did. We were not only upset with ourselves, we were upset with the propaganda machine and sought to expose it so that others would not be taken in. Verse 17 says,

Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day.
Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim.

This subsection of the Hivites were called Gibeonites because Gibeon was the head of the four cities that had engaged in this deception. And the Israelite leaders confronted them. Just because they had been buffaloed did not mean that they could not rebuke the Gibeonites and hold them accountable. They marched to the city in a show of force to confront them. And we will see in verses 24-25 that the Gibeonites humbly admitted to what they had done.

Later in the sermon I will show how God would bring huge blessings out of this disaster. But none of it would have happened without this confrontation, or without holding them accountable, or without letting everyone know what the truth really was.

Brothers and sisters - when people deceive you or in other ways sin against you, it is perfectly appropriate to confront them over their actions (assuming of course that they have engaged in a clear cut sin, not just something you didn't like). With fellow believers the hope is that they will repent. Matthew 18:15 says, "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." I love that - if he hears to you, you have gained your brother. What could be better? Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." In other words, examine your own heart because you may be the one at fault. Now, there are times when people confront a brother over something that is not a sin, and the Scripture does not give him the right to be upset if there is no repentance. You only repent when there is genuine sin. Likewise, some people are quick to take blame even when they are not at fault. Well, that's a kind of falsehood too. We are aren't talking about that. We are talking about confronting something that is clearly a sin.

I'm not big into sports, but a pastor shared a basketball story with me that I think illustrates what is going on in this story so well - especially on the good outcome. In January of 2018 the Portland Trail Blazers basketball team had been struggling and then suddenly turned things around into a 13-game winning streak. And people were puzzled on what it was that made everything turn around. Let me quote from the Oregon newspaper at length. It said,

Joe Freeman, a reporter for The Oregonian newspaper, did some investigation and discovered that their winning streak coincided with “a confession, an apology, and subsequent forgiveness.”

That January, starting forward Maurice “Moe” Harkless lost his spot in the playing rotation. Subsequently, when the team rebounded with a win against an inferior opponent, Harkless’ box score line bore the dreaded “DNP-CD” designation, which means “did not play, coach’s decision.” When Moe looked at the video footage of himself from that night, he didn’t like what he saw – a listless demeanor amidst teammates who were cheering and applauding from the bench.

After getting the coach’s permission, he interrupted the next day’s practice session to apologize to his teammates for his behavior. [After the apology he stated] “No matter what’s going on, I can’t be a bad teammate. Those are still my guys.”

That expression of vulnerability was met with almost instant forgiveness and respect. The bond of the team was strengthened, and Harkless experienced a resurgence in his play that earned his starting spot again. Eventually, that team chemistry resulted in a thirteen-game win streak.¹

That’s the kind of thing that can happen when sinful behavior is confronted, confessed, and forgiven. People sometimes feel like if they admit to failure they won’t be able to live with themselves. No, that’s backward thinking. It is precisely those who humble themselves that are the most respected in God’s kingdom. God opposes the proud and lifts up the humble.

Just consider God’s plan of salvation. You had to be humbled first, didn’t you? He came into this world to expose our sin and to provide a way to be restored through Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and brings growing restoration into our lives. But He does that for those who repent of their sins, right?

We will see that this is exactly what happens with the Gibeonites, who later get saved and become some of the most selfless citizens in God’s kingdom. But we shouldn’t get ahead of our story. The key point here is that they *were* confronted.

¹ Joe Freeman, “The Curious Case of Moe Harkless: How an apology turned season around for Trail Blazers’ forward,” *The Oregonian*, 3-22-18.

IV. But it is important to keep your word even if there is fallout from doing so (vv. 18-21)

Verses 18-21 then go on to show how the leaders kept their word even knowing full well that there would be a falling out with the people for doing so.

A. They didn't attack - just as promised (v. 18a)

Verse 18 shows some of that falling out.

But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

So there was a division of opinion, but the leaders stood strong for what they believed God was calling them to do. No doubt there were Israelites who continued to disagree with their decision to honor the covenant. No group of believers always has 100% unity on every issue, but in this case the Israelites rightly recognized that leaders have to make the best decisions they can before the Lord. So even though they disagreed, they submitted. That's appropriate. Some people won't submit unless they agree. Well, that's not a very good test of your submission.

Now, I happen to believe that the leaders made the right decision, though I have friends who think they did not - that the covenant was null and void because it was based on deception. But here is one of several reasons why I think they made the right decision. I believe these leaders recognized that if they had paid attention to all the lessons we looked at last week, they would not have fallen for this ruse. So they felt like they had to take responsibility. In part it was *their* fault. So they decided that they were obligated before God to honor the covenant.

B. But there was a falling out as a result (v. 18b)

And you fathers will sometimes have to make the best decision that you can. And there are times when you will take heat for doing the right thing on controversial issues, but it's better to take heat from others than to take heat from God on an issue that you believe you would be in sin on. God calls us to integrity no matter what the cost. And again, I happen to believe that the leaders *did* do the right thing here.

But let's examine this whole issue of the people being really ticked off with the leaders. At this point the easiest thing for the leaders to do would have been to cave in to the people's desires and to go ahead and attack the Gibeonites. After all, both sides had some Scripture to back up their position. The people could appeal to God's repeated commands to not make any covenant with the Canaanites. And the leaders could appeal to Scriptures that indicated that even if you have entered into a covenant with bad information, you are stuck by that covenant unless it would be sinful to keep it. It would have been sinful to keep the covenant if the Gibeonites had brought their idolatry into Israel. But if the Gibeonites are willing to abandon their gods and serve the God of Israel (which they were), is it really any

different than the strangers who have already covenanted with God? And the people could say, “Yes, it *is* different. These people lied to you.” And the argument could go back and forth. It’s doubtful that the people would have all been totally satisfied with the leaders’ final decision, but the leaders had to make the best decision they could before the Lord and stick with it. They feared God more than they feared man. So they gave an unpopular “No.”

You too may need to give an unpopular “No” or an unpopular “Yes” in order to maintain your integrity before God. You are not claiming to be infallible; you are just saying that until you can clearly see from Scripture that doing the opposite would not be a sin, you have to make the best Biblical decision you can. And sometimes the unpopular decision *will* be crystal clear. It might be saying “No” to a divorce or “No” to a marriage. It might be saying “No” to a bankruptcy as an easy way out. Or it might be saying “Yes” to submission to your husband. And what makes all of these answers difficult is that in your mind you can think of all kinds of great reasons why your answer should be the opposite. But this is where last week’s sermon is so important - you need to have the inward integrity to want to do God’s will no matter how much discomfort that might bring.

C. They stood firm for integrity before the Lord (v. 19)

In verse 19 the leaders stand firm:

Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them.

They made a final decision. It was unpopular, yes. But this was exactly what God was calling them to do - to lead with integrity and keep their word.

When Leon L Bean first started his mail order business (LL Bean) back in 1912, he sold a hunting boot with a money-back guarantee. Sadly, defects in the design led to 90% of those boots being returned. It was a brand new startup company, and making good on the guarantee appeared like it would destroy the business. But Leon Bean insisted on keeping his word even if it meant he lost everything including his house. And God blessed that decision. L.L. Bean grew into one of the largest mail-order businesses in the world over the next few decades - in large part because it treated its customers with integrity. Integrity is a hard thing to keep, but it is a characteristic that God blesses. We must be men and women of integrity.

D. They let them live because they feared the Lord (v. 20)

Well, moving on, verse 20 says that they let them live because they feared the Lord:

This we will do to them: We will let them live [get this next phrase], *lest wrath be upon us* because of the oath which we swore to them.

Obviously the fear of God was uppermost in their minds when they made this decision. And the more we have a constant awareness of God’s presence and power in our lives, the easier it will be to make decisions of integrity. This is where developing intimacy with God is so important.

But this also illustrates how serious oath taking is. Some liars are quite quick to take oaths and say, “I swear that I am telling the truth.” Well, God’s wrath will be upon them for misusing oaths. He takes those things seriously. Of course, we need to keep all our promises, but we especially need to keep the oaths we have made. Have you reviewed the marriage vows that you took to your bride? Those vows were not just intended to be pretty decoration to a ceremony. God will hold you accountable for violating those oaths. He intends for husbands to nurture and care for their wives and for wives to submit to and care for their husbands. What about your membership vows in the church? There have been people who have left this church badly and have violated their vows. And I believe God will hold them accountable. We are not saying that people can’t leave the church. They can. We have open arms to let people come and go, but we do expect people to keep their membership promises. What about your baptismal vows that you parents took to raise your children in a certain way? Don’t just treat these things as cute ceremonies. They are vows, and God’s covenant wrath looms over those who break them. Sadly we live in an age when breaking promises seems like no big deal, but to God it is a big deal.

E. But there was a cost to the Gibeonites (v. 21)

But moving on, verse 21 shows that Joshua inflicted a cost on the Gibeonites. They didn’t get off scott-free. Both sides sinned and both sides suffered. It says,

And the rulers said to them, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.”

Some have thought that this was a breaking of the covenant, but it was not. There are two sub-points that need to be kept in mind.

1. The Israelite leaders kept the letter of the agreement (cf “servants” in verses 8,11)

First, think about what the leaders were referring to when they said, “let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them”? Where had the Israelite leaders promised the Gibeonites that they would be woodcutters and water carriers? Well, maybe not in exactly those words, but hadn’t the Gibeonites said in the covenant that they wanted to be Israel’s servants or (as the Hebrew could be rendered) as bondslaves? Yes, they had. Look at verse 8:

But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.”

So he was holding them to it. What the Gibeonites had probably intended was for them to be in a subsidiary vassal role to Israel but to keep their independent status as a nation. But the covenant didn’t say that. And they *had* indeed promised, “We are your servants.” They did so a second time in verse 11. It says,

Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, “Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, ‘We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us.’”

So based on that, the Israelite leaders really were carrying out the letter of the law in the covenant. And because of the Gibeonite deception, the Gibeonites could not expect more than the bare letter of the law in the covenant language. Since the Gibeonites had promised, “We are your servants,” Joshua brilliantly uses that to turn them into literal servants.

2. But they did not feel like they needed to keep everything that was intended by the deceivers (v. 21; cf. Deut 20:10-18)

Obviously (as the next sub-point says), it wasn't the way the Gibeonites had intended things to be, but Joshua was making the best that he could out of a bad situation without in any way going against his word. He had read the fine print of the contract (so to speak), and found a loophole. He was pushing things as far as he could toward a Biblical solution. He had been suckered into signing the covenant and so would keep the exact wording of the covenant, but the Gibeonites were caught in the act of lying, so their lying was taken seriously as well.

Let's apply this. Do you keep the letter of the law in the promises you make to your children? If you don't, you can't really be complaining about other people's broken promises. In his book, *Men of Integrity*, Mark Moring shared a story about his son, Peter. He said,

“It was late, and my young sons, Peter and Paul, had been in bed for at least an hour. My wife and I had just returned from our Bible study group, and I snuck into the boys' room to say good night.>

“Dad, can I have some ice cream?”>

“No, Peter, it's late, way past bedtime.”>

“But Dad, you promised.”>

He was right. Peter had asked for ice cream earlier in the day, but we didn't have any. And I had said, “I'll get some for you later, I promise.”>

Dinner came and went. We cleaned up the kitchen; the boys picked up their toys. The sitter arrived. And my wife and I left for Bible study. I'd forgotten all about the ice cream. But Peter hadn't.>

So, even though it was after 10 o'clock, I hopped in the car, drove to the convenience store, got a half gallon, and hurried home.>

Peter and I enjoyed that chocolate-vanilla swirl together. After all, I had a promise to keep.”>

Once you consider and say “Yes” you need to commit—even when it costs you!

And I agree. We have got to keep our promises. Let me apply this to you employees. Burke Marketing Research asked the executives of 100 of the largest companies in America what qualities in their employees irritated them the most. The answers boiled down to seven characteristics, each of which involves integrity. Let me read you the seven most irritating characteristics:

1. Irresponsibility, goofing-off and doing personal business on company time.
2. Second, arrogance, ego problems and excessive aggressiveness. Bosses dislike those who spend more time talking about their achievements than in getting the job done.
3. Third, absenteeism and lateness.
3. Fourth, not following company policy.
4. Fifth, failure to follow the rules makes management feel an employee can't be trusted.
5. Sixth, whining and complaining.
6. Seventh, laziness and lack of commitment and dedication, and failure to care about the firm's best interests.

Those all speak to lack of integrity. How can employees complain about their company's lack of integrity when the employees lack integrity.

V. All learn the deception does not pay off (vv. 22-25). The Israelite leaders who demonstrate integrity demand integrity of the Gibeonites.

Back to our text, in verses 22-25 we see that the leaders who are following God's call to integrity for themselves are now demanding integrity of the Gibeonites. And that's as it should be.

Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell near us? Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

He is holding them to their word. Over time the Gibeonites will learn to be a people of integrity big time. But without some repercussions, they may never have learned that lesson. Let's look at two sub-points.

A. God did not approve of their deception and thus their restitution is to God, not man (vv. 22-23)

First, it is crystal clear that God did not approve of their deception. And since it was *God* that they had ultimately lied to, the restitution was to God. They would serve the house of the Lord. And several commentaries point out that they were serving the whole congregation *by serving at the altar*. It wasn't two different groups that they were serving. The English is a little bit unclear, but the Hebrew grammar is clear that they served the congregation by serving exclusively at the altar. And later history demonstrates this as

well. From this time on they are called the servants of the tabernacle or servants of Yehowah. *He* is the one who gets the restitution in this case.

B. Their acceptance of God's gracious terms (vv. 24-25)

Second, they accepted God's gracious terms in verses 24-25. Let me read that.

Josh. 9:24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25 And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us."

They realize they have done wrong and accept whatever retribution or whatever grace that Israel might extend to them. And that made it much easier for Israel to extend grace to them. The integrity of Joshua prompted humility in the Gibeonites and that humility was the beginning of God and the Gibeonites being bound together. Now, it is only hinted at in these verses, but of the 143 commentaries that I own on the book of Joshua, most of them agree that verses 26-27 hint at what later becomes a reality. Let's look at those hints first.

VI. Humility leads to blessing (vv. 26-27)

I'm going to read verses 26-27 and then I will comment.

So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

Of course, at this point the Israelites would have had no way of knowing if the Gibeonites' humble response was sincere or if it was just a realization that it was the best they could hope for. We know from later history that God used this transition to save them and turn them into a people with a passion for God, with real servant's hearts, and with loyalty to God's temple. In fact, because of their faith, Gibeon actually became the place of choice for the location of the tabernacle for much of the time between Joshua and Solomon. We will get to that in a bit, but let's look at some hints in these verses alone:

A. Five hints in the text that the Gibeonites would become close to God

First, we have already seen that Joshua is a type of Jesus and when Joshua is referred to in the book of Hebrews, his name is spelled as "Jesus" in the Greek. It's just the Hebrew form of Jesus. And all that Joshua does points to Christ's work. It's the first hint that there may be some redemptive work at least symbolized by this passage.

Second, it says that Joshua “delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel.” It obviously refers to their *physical* lives being delivered, but is that all that was intended by the word? Maybe not - especially with the particular *Hebrew* word that is used. The word for “delivered” (Natzel - נצל) when it is in the Hiphil (which it is here) means “saved.” So you could translate it that Joshua *saved* them. Once we look at later history, we will begin to realize that maybe the Hiphil form of Natzel was used to give a hint that there was a fuller salvation than simply physical salvation. It wouldn’t be enough evidence by itself, but it is a small hint. And I think it is strengthened by the fact that they didn’t fight. Gibeon is called one of the royal cities. The four of them could have fought. Instead, they submitted to Israel’s decision.

Third, Joshua made them wood cutters and water carriers for the tabernacle of the congregation - and specifically had them provide for the holiest place of the tabernacle - the altar of the Lord - which to me is astounding since very few people could approach the altar of the Lord. Prior to this time only priests and deacons could do so. In later Scripture they are called the Nethinim, or servants of the Lord. Could it be simply a reference to physical servants? On the surface, yes. But it could well be a hint of their later status as very beloved Nethinim or servants of Yehowah.

Fourth, it says that they were called to serve in the place that God would choose, which we later discover was two spots: Shiloh (Josh 18:1) and Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39), implying that God had already planned for the place of His presence to be in the heart of the territory of the Gibeonites. Again, by itself it is not enough to prove anything, but this explicit statement that God had already planned to use a place to have His presence dwell, and to later discover that the place God had previously planned was Gibeon, is a pretty big hint. And there are several commentaries that take it as more than just a hint. But I will just take it as a hint.

Fifth, they persevered in serving over time. That is hinted at in the phrase “even to this day” - which is likely toward the end of Joshua’s life. They didn’t run away. They faithfully served.

B. But what is hinted at in verses 26-27, is explicitly laid out in later Scripture. Because of their constant contact with the tabernacle (v. 27) they truly convert and become remarkable testimonies to God’s grace (1 Kings 3:4-5; 1 Chron. 9:2; 12:4; 16:39; 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3; Ezra 2:43,58,70; 7:7,24; 8:17,20; Neh. 3:7,26,31; 7:24,25,46,60,73; 10:28; 11:13,21; etc.)

But where verses 26-27 simply give *hints*, later history reveals that this constant exposure to God’s Word did a powerful work in their lives and God began to richly transform them and bless them. In chapter 10 God will work an incredibly great miracle on their behalf. Later, God will call Gibeon Mishkan Yehowah (מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה), or the dwelling place of Yehowah in 1 Chronicles 16:39. So the main Gibeonite city was called the dwelling place of Yehowah. 2 Chronicles 1:3 says,

Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness

Later, a Gibeonite would become one of David's chief Mighty Men in 1 Chronicles 12:4. And a Gibeonite would much later in history help Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls in Nehemiah 3:7. A. W. Pink² and many other authors point out that the Gibeonites are later called the Nethinim or temple servants who are devoted to the temple of God. They sacrificed a lot to return with Ezra and Nehemiah to establish a new dwelling place for God. They didn't have to return, but they did. And I've given a long list of verses in your outline that show the remarkable history of faithfulness to God that the Gibeonites had for 400 years up to the time of David and for another 470 years up through the time of Nehemiah. That is 870 years of covenant succession.

They are a remarkable example of people whose lives were so turned upside down that they put many Israelites to shame. We can pray that we would have many generations of covenant faithfulness in our descendants. So be encouraged and be challenged by this passage on covenant faithfulness. This is God's grace turning curse into blessing; turning a people doomed to disaster into productive and godly citizenry. And the only way that could happen was for Christ to bear the curse for them.

VII. Conclusion — How God can (and does) redeem even our bad decisions of the past

Well, let me end by encouraging you to not moon and moan over your past sins and mistakes, but to look for ways in which those very failures can be a means of growing in grace. They might be a story to warn the next generation to not repeat *your* sins and mistakes, but rather to learn from them. Be transparent enough to share that story. Don't be embarrassed by your past. God's grace covers it. Likewise, the very trouble you got yourself into may have introduced you to people who are now a blessing in your life. Or the blessing may simply be that God changed *you*.

Have you ever seen mosaics made out of broken pieces of glass and other shattered items? Some of those mosaics, like the two bottom pictures in your outlines, can be beautiful. Well the same is true when God turns our broken lives into *His* mosaic.

Let me tell you the story of Jaime Guerrero. He was a Mexican con man and bank robber who got caught and was serving a seventy-year prison term in Mexico (which is basically a life sentence). Christians would come to the prison to distribute food, toiletries, clothing,

² Pink says, "The descendants of these Gibeonites—termed 'Nethinim' or 'devoted persons'—had a place of honor in the service of the temple centuries later (1 Chron. 9:2; Ezra 8:20; Neh. 7:60)" — Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 260.

and to talk about Jesus. As a manipulator (and he was an experienced manipulator), he went along with them just to get the items that he needed in prison. He was sort of like those Gibeonites. But one day a pastor cornered him and pressured him to make a decision for Christ, leading him in a prayer. His testimony was that he really didn't mean it; he only prayed the prayer to keep getting things from the Christians. But he couldn't get that prayer out of his mind and the Lord finally caused him to truly embrace Christ in faith. His fake faith eventually led him to real faith. And it turned his life upside down. He began witnessing and then preaching in prison. Eventually he developed prison ministry all over Mexico from within the prison system. God overruled his manipulations and turned a Gibeonite into a Nethinim - a servant of God who experienced the reality of God's power in his life.

Well, God can do the same for you, and your family, and your friends. Don't waste time cringing over your past times that you have blown it. Let those events drive you closer and closer to the heart of God. Your security should not be in how well you have done anyway; your security should be in Jesus. In fact, your very brokenness can be the most powerful testimony of His grace. God can make beautiful mosaics out of broken pieces. May we see more and more mosaics of beauty in this church. Amen.