

Bad Cop, Good Cop

Joshua 9:1-4a

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, June 25th 2023

I. Introduction

You don't have to live very long to realize that life is not static. It's always changing. And certainly the attacks and strategies of Satan are changing. We might wish that we could just coast along for a while without having to be on guard, but 1 Corinthians 16:3 tells us to "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." The Greek tense indicates that we need to keep watching and keep standing fast. 1 Timothy 6:12 tells us to keep fighting the good fight of faith. And the reason for that is that Satan's kingdom will never let up, and that means, neither should we. Demons will constantly be looking for weak areas in your life that they can take advantage of. If they fail to defeat you one way, they will try a different way.

And I believe Satan was behind the two new strategies that we are going to look at in *this* chapter. Satan was already successful in making Israel defeated in chapter 7, but to his frustration, Israel repented and came out of that situation even stronger. And the covenant that they entered into in the last verses of chapter 8 turned Israel into a formidable foe.

So it's not surprising to find Satan's kingdom doing its utmost in this chapter to bring Israel down once again. And the first four verses juxtapose two wildly different approaches to get Israel to compromise. We are only going to look at four verses today. Satan's first approach is to expose Israel to fear and intimidation in verses 1-2. He then exposes Israel to flattery, praise, and admiration in the following verses. I tried to capture the essence of Satan's two strategies with the title, Bad Cop, Good Cop. You can invert that phrase, but we are taking it in the order of our text.

The bad cop good cop expression refers to a psychological technique used by some law enforcement officers to interrogate a suspect. I don't consider it a very ethical approach to interrogation, but it is commonly used. What happens is that two law enforcement officers will purposely assume two contrasting roles in order to elicit information from a suspect or gain a confession. If one approach doesn't work perhaps the other one will.

The officer pretending to be the bad cop will take a very aggressive and confrontational approach to the suspect, using all kinds of intimidating and harsh threats to put pressure on him. And sometimes the suspect will cave in at that point. If not, the other officer will later come in and pretend to be the good cop. He will act very sympathetic with the plight of the suspect, trying to help him, giving him reassurances, and sometimes even promising rewards. The purpose of the second cop is to make the suspect more inclined to open up him and cooperate in hopes of getting off easy. But either way, they hope to get some good information.

II. Bad cop tactic to intimidate (vv. 1-2)

Well, verses 1-2 show the bad cop technique of intimidation. And I should point out that the Scripture portrays Satan as using intimidation very successfully. He walks about as a roaring lion. Having grown up in Africa, I know that the roar of a lion is very intimidating. Starting to read at verse 1.

Josh. 9:1 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 toward Lebanon — the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite — heard about it, Josh. 9:2 that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

Israel was going to have a tough time taking on the tribes one by one. But it would be even tougher with all of them ganged up against her. And this tactic could easily have led Israel to fear. And what happens when you fear? What happened to Peter when he began to be intimidated by the waves? Fear led to doubt, right? If you begin to have doubts your faith wavers. And without faith, it is impossible to please God, which means you will lose your battles. So you can see that intimidation is a very effective ploy of Satan. Fear is a big enemy of Christianity. (I ought to know - that has been one of my besetting sins in the past.) As long as we are intimidated, we will not take the conquest as God has called us to do. Instead, we will settle for symbolic gestures of opposition. So Satan knows how to use intimidation very effectively. So let's analyze each phrase.

A. Astounding pagan unity (v. 1a)

Notice first the degree to which these pagans were unified. If you know anything about the history of that period, this is a remarkable statement. Verse 1 mentions "all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan..." That means every king *west* of the Jordan. And lest we not get the point, he specifies every king of all three geographical regions that were west of Jordan - the highlands, the lowlands, and the coastal regions. That covers everything in the north, central, and south regions. And then, lest we think that this was hyperbole, he reiterates the same point a *third* way - all the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Canaan was riddled with independent city-states that had different languages and different nationalities. And if you know much about their history, you know these city states were at each other's throats around this period. They were not friends; not at all.

B. The reason - they heard about it (v. 1b)

So why would they put aside their squabbles and enter into this alliance? The "when" at the beginning of the verse finds its finishing phrase in the last three words. It was when they "heard about it." The "it" refers back to the events of chapter 8 - the defeat of Ai and the radical commitment that all Israel had made to follow Yehowah in the last six verses of that chapter.

1. They discovered from Ai that Israel can be defeated

First, the defeat of Israel at Ai made them realize that Israel was not invincible. They might not have realized the real reason for the defeat - compromise in the camp. But if Ai was able to make Israel flee the first time, then it seems like a good assumption that if all of them united together, they might have the same effect. In any case, since both Jericho and Ai have now fallen, they realize that they will be easy pickings if they don't hang together.

2. They now know that this is a religious war for keeps

But I believe the main thing that the "it" refers to was the covenant that had just been made in the last verses of chapter 8. The Canaanites no doubt had their scouts and spies. And after they get wind of how committed Israel was to God's covenant in chapter 8, and how they had affirmed God's curses upon all the sins of the land, they realized that this was a religious war for keeps. There was not going to be any negotiating. The Israelites were fighting against them *on principle* - not pragmatism, but principle. So they are motivated to put down their differences with each other and to oppose God's people. They were able to compromise with each other, but they now knew that Israel was not going to compromise. They could see that Israel was on fire for Yehowah.

Tremper Longman says of this verse, "When righteousness becomes aggressive and bent on an objective, it has a way of uniting the forces of righteousness and the enemies of righteousness."¹ So Israel was united around a cause in a powerful way. That's good. But that very unity around God's cause made God's enemies feel like *they* needed to be united too. Anytime you see God's people rallying around a God-given cause (whether it is in China, India, Uganda, Nigeria, or elsewhere), you will see the enemies of the church putting aside their differences and beginning to unite in their common hatred for the crown rights of King Jesus.

You can see this principle in the Gospels. As the followers of Christ began to grow in numbers and began to passionately embrace His teachings, the enemies of Christ also united in opposition. Prior to Christ's ministry, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians were constantly at each other's throats. They had quite different philosophies and practices. They were competitors. When you read some of their writings it appears that they actually hated each other. But as Jesus and His followers began to become more and more of a threat to all three factions, those three factions united together to oppose Jesus. They intuitively recognized that they needed each other if they were going to be effective in destroying Christianity.

And that has been true in every age. Many are predicting increasing persecution of Christians in America as more and more in the church begin to embrace God's law (and that is happening). Though pagans hold to wildly different views of reality and might ordinarily be at each other's throats, more and more of them are uniting in opposition to those of us

¹ Tremper Longman III, ed., Deuteronomy Thru Ruth, vol. 2, Layman's Bible Commentary (Barbour Publishing, 2009), 125.

who oppose sexual perversion, abortion, government education, radical environmentalism, laws against home births, feminism, gender fluidity, critical race theory, wokism, the Covid vaccine, fake climate change agendas, restrictive gun control laws, collectivism, ungodly taxation, and other hot button questions. They may not agree with each other on every one of those issues, but they see that Christianity is a common enemy, so they feel the need to jointly attack us.

It's odd how many corporations are willing to lose customers in order to align on the wrong side of some of these issues. Thrivent and Chick Filet are the two most recent (and actually the most puzzling) examples of organizations going soft on Sodomite issues and in the process potentially losing the vast majority of their customer base. It's irrational - which to me makes it smell of the demonic. Demons don't mind leading people to irrational conclusions.

And then you've got the schools, media, government agencies, and others who have been picking on Christians. Even the left has occasionally been surprised at how aggressive the FBI and IRS have been last year and this year in going after politically incorrect organizations and individuals. In any case, what seems to be the only uniting force to hold some of these coalitions temporarily together is a hatred for God's infallible Bible that gives God's infallible pronouncements against their ridiculous positions. They see that as a threat - just as Jack Ryan was a threat in *Clear and Present Danger*. He was a threat because he couldn't be made to compromise. And actually, I think it is the demons behind them that see it as a threat. But let's move on.

C. The purpose - intimidation (v. 2a)

What's the purpose of *this* coalition? Verse 2 says "that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel..." They sought to flex their muscles. Perhaps with a united front they might be able to eradicate the problem. Or even if they couldn't eradicate Israel as a threat, they could perhaps intimidate the Israelites from coming any closer to the other cities. So a show of force was designed to intimidate. And of course, Satan knows that if he can bring fear, fear will evaporate faith, and without faith they will not be able win. So that's his first strategy.

And there does seem to be a similar strategy of intimidation that is being used against any Christians today who are willing to go to the front lines of the spiritual battlefield. Even Newsweek magazine said a couple of weeks ago, "Millions of Americans find themselves shocked and appalled by the weaponization of the federal government to crush legitimate political dissent. Specifically, the use of the FBI by the Department of Justice against parents, Christians, and pro-life advocates grows more intense by the day." I was really surprised to see this article in Newsweek, which is kind of a centrist magazine. One of many examples that they cited was the arrest of Mark Houck. Newsweek said,

Recall that the FBI last year sent more than a dozen agents to arrest pro-life advocate Mark Houck at gunpoint in front of his wife and children. They carted Houck off in handcuffs and a "belly chain" as if he were a violent criminal, and then forced him to endure a lengthy, humiliating public trial with the threat of an

11-year prison sentence looming over his head. The case against Houck was so flimsy that the Philadelphia district attorney declined to file any charges, and courts additionally threw out a civil lawsuit against Houck filed by the clinic escort. Yet the FBI proceeded anyway. Houck was ultimately exonerated of all charges, though why he was singled out, and why the Department of Justice chose to go to trial, remains a mystery.

The heavy hand of federal police power has gone missing when it comes to violence against Catholic churches and pro-life care centers. Since 2020, more than 300 incidents of vandalism, arson, and destruction of Catholic churches have been recorded. There have also been almost 90 incidents of fire bombings, vandalism, and other attacks on pro-life organizations that offer free resources, support, and care to women and children in need. The Department of Justice has taken little to no action to stem this ongoing violence, yet decided to indict at least 11 pro-life advocates under the FACE Act—a law that protects abortion clinics as well as churches and pro-life pregnancy centers.²

Anyway, Newsweek's conclusion as they puzzled through all of this united attack on free speech (which the pagans supposedly champion - unless its *our* free speech) was that there could be only one reason - the federal government is using its agencies to intimidate opponents of politically correct issues into silence.

It seems like the recent attacks against midwives in Nebraska have been for exactly the same reason. Since they can't win in court, it appears that their only goal in bringing lawsuits is to intimidate. And it *is* intimidating to have to go to court. We need to be praying for these people - that God would help to sustain their faith and courage.

D. Opposing Israel with one accord (with one mouth - v. 2b)

But I think there is another lesson to be learned in the last phrase of verse 2. It says, "with one accord." If you look in the margin you will see that it's literally with one mouth - they all parroted the same false propaganda within and among their tribes. The Hebrew is clear that they are all saying the same thing. I think a very literal modern example of this is seen in Plandemic 3, The Great Awakening - where Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, President Biden of America, the current President of China, the Chancellor of Germany, and many other heads of state were all parroting exactly the same slogans about the need for a global reset word-for-word. That can't be by accident. The World Economic Summit (which all these heads of state are a part of) is engaging in the same kind of conspiracy against the remnants of Western Christian civilization.

Now, as I already mentioned, previously these nations had been enemies. They distrusted and feared each other and warred with each other. So why are they friends now? It is because they were confronted with a consistent Christianity. The point is that

² <https://www.newsweek.com/campaign-intimidate-churches-pro-life-groups-getting-worse-opinion-1802384>

compromised Christianity is no threat whatsoever to humanism or atheism. Bill Maher, who is an atheist television host, put on a show where he ridiculed the idea that Christians were being persecuted, citing compromised liberal Christian after Christian that was not persecuted. But that's the point - if Satan can get Christians to compromise, they are no longer a threat. Down through history all humanists have always had one common enemy: a vibrant, uncompromising, aggressive Christianity. That will unite humanists like nothing else will.

Look on the internet and you will find traditional enemies united in what they will exclude - not just in America (like the cartoon in your outline shows), but elsewhere too. You will find Hindus and Muslims who hate each others guts, and yet when it comes to opposition to vibrant Christianity in India, they are united. They don't tend to unite in hatred to nominal Christians. It is the vibrant Christianity that is sweeping that nation that has aroused their anger. It's demonic.

E. The ineffectiveness of this coalition (it quickly fell apart - cf. chapters 10-11)

But here is why I am not discouraged by that in the least - and this is the next point.

First, this coalition's lack of inner coherency guaranteed that they would eventually be at each other's throats again - and they were. Commentators point out that this coalition didn't last long enough to battle unitedly even one time - not even one time. By chapter 10 a whole bunch of this coalition had had a falling out. And yes, there were some that were still united, but a bunch left the coalition. The same was true in chapter 11. It wasn't a true unity. And because there is no inner worldview coherency in the modern persecutors of Christianity, God can easily dismantle what they are doing if it suits His purposes.

Second, the very fact that there was opposition rather than repentance shows the dread that Satan had of a group of committed believers. If you are getting persecuted it probably means that Satan sees you as a threat, which means your life and witness is counting; it's doing something. Be encouraged. If Satan takes notice, that's probably a good sign.

Third, the enemies of Christ don't have a leg to stand on. They lack the power of God. They lack consistency. They lack rationality. They lack a victorious faith. They are not as formidable as they might at first appear.

And fourth, with God on our side, we are on the winning side in history. God guarantees it. The American humanist association seems to intuitively recognize this since it is scared to death of a rising breed of Christians who are not embarrassed by anything in the Bible. They call them out as Reformed Reconstructionists. After describing the consistency of our worldview, the comprehensive application of Scripture to all of life, the Postmillennial optimism, and the confidence that the Bible provides the answers that pagans have not been providing, the article says, "It is, as well, a formidable theology designed to take on all

comers.”³ And it is!!! Praise God. The Reformed faith is. We are blessed with an incredible Puritan heritage that puts the fear of God into Satan. The author of that article, Frederick Clarkson, appears to be more confident of our power than we are. But the reality of the principles of verses 1-2 ought to drive us to God’s grace in faith rather than intimidating us. So brothers and sisters, don’t be discouraged by persecution. Recognize Satan’s tactics as the desperate tactics of a loser. The Bible guarantees that he is losing and will progressively lose *in history*.

III. Good cop - deceptive offer of friendship (vv. 3-4a)

But Satan is clever. He doesn’t just use one or two strategies. In these first four verses he uses two strategies simultaneously. His thought might have been that if one doesn’t work, perhaps the other will. In verses 3-4 he offers a covenant of friendship between Israel and one of the enemies. If he can get Israel to covenant with God’s enemies, Israel will no longer have God fighting for them. Now, in this case God makes it backfire since the Gibeonites appear to eventually sincerely embrace the faith. God had already selected them as some of His elect. But we will save that for another time. Right now we will look at the dangerous temptation that Satan brings. Starting at verse 3:

Josh. 9:3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4 they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended...

And that is as far as I will read today. We will pick up that interesting story next time. But let’s analyze three things that Satan was working on in order to sideline Israel.

A. Gibeon had more knowledge of Israel than Israel did of them (v. 3)

First of all, Satan made sure that the Gibeonites knew more about Israel than Israel knew about the Gibeonites. Even though the leaders were initially skeptical in verses 6 and following, they didn’t know much about these Gibeonites. But the Gibeonites knew all about Israel’s previous battles. In order to not give away their near location, they only mention the battles on the other side of the Jordan that happened months before and the miraculous events of the Exodus. So they are selective in what intel they speak about. They had done some pretty good research and knew that they couldn’t win an all-out battle. They would have to take advantage of Israel’s naivete.

And that is a strategy that gets many a Christian down. Naive Christians go to College and without even realizing it they succumb to hostile ideologies. The most dangerous teachers are not the ones who are obnoxious and who very openly attack Christianity. Those enemies are readily spotted and don’t tend to be liked anyway - not by anybody. No, the

³ <https://politicalresearch.org/1994/03/01/christian-reconstructionismtheocratic-dominionism-gains-influence>

most dangerous teachers are the ones who care about these students, sympathize with them, are open minded to the Christian ideas and simply want to help these Christians expand their horizons and be more fulfilled.

My 11th grade English professor used praise of my Christianity together with empathetic words, thoughtfulness, warmth, and caring to introduce me to his existentialist ideas. He was far more dangerous than my biology teacher who on day one asked everyone in the class who believed in six day creation to stand up. I stood up, and he spent the next half hour humiliating me, mocking me, and giving reasons why all six day creationists are raving lunatics. That biology professor had very little impact in my life. I *knew* he was an enemy. But my very kind English teacher sowed all kinds of seeds of doubt in my mind. Thankfully, I was living with my brother John at that time and he taught me presuppositional apologetics that year and help me avoid some of those dangers. Presuppositionalism helped me to understand the enemy better than he understands himself. And thankfully we have a class on presuppositional apologetics right now. But when kids go to College, they are confronted by Gibeonites who often know more about Christianity than the Christians in College know about the other false worldviews. Just sayin’.

B. Gibeon deliberately deceived Israel (v. 4a)

But the second thing that Gibeon did was to deceive. Verse 4 says, “they worked craftily, and went and pretended...” The word for “craftily” means “be cunning, be crafty, be deceptive, be shrewd.”⁴ In Luke 16:8 Jesus said, “the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.” Well, this means that Christians (who tend to be trusting) can be easily taken in and fooled. And next week we will look at the precise ways that the Gibeonites fooled the Israelites. There is a lot we can learn from those verses.

But this is why it is not good for our children to be interacting with total strangers on social media. They can pretend to be good, friendly, and trustworthy. In Christian circles we aren’t used to lying and deception being a normal part of life, so when we encounter it, even if we do have our guard up, it is natural to *want* to believe what the other person is saying. Demons can take advantage of that.

Generally speaking, Satan likes to be covert. As already has been pointed out he does have open manifestations of his evil in some cultures (frontal attacks), but according to 1 Corinthians 11:14 he generally likes to appear as an angel of light to believers. The next verse in 1 Corinthians 11 says,

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works

I knew one American Baptist minister who was one of those angels of light. When I was in my early twenties, he was constantly lending me books that I think he hoped would put

⁴ A. Luc, NIDOTTE, s.v. “*ν*,” 3:536. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/NIDOTTE#28410>

doubts into my mind. But he was the nicest guy. You couldn't ask for a nicer guy. And he knew how to preach. Wow! did he know how to preach. I listened to him preaching an amazing Easter sermon one time that was spot on in so many ways. But what puzzled me is that I knew for a fact that he didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus, or the deity of Jesus, or even the sinlessness of Jesus, or miracles, or salvation by grace alone. After the sermon I asked him if he felt like a hypocrite preaching something he didn't believe. He said "No. These people need a psychological crutch and that's what I'm here to give them." But through his kindness and gracious ways he led many a young person astray. And there are many professors in Seminaries who lead students astray by being as gracious and flattering as these Gibeonites were. The mainline denominations are full of preachers who preach things they don't believe because without doing so they wouldn't have a pulpit. But they use their positions to gradually undermine the denomination until the denomination as a whole goes liberal.

C. Gibeon sought to make a peace treaty (v. 4b)

The third thing the Gibeonites did was to try to make a peace treaty. The first sentence in verse 4 ends by saying, "and pretended to be ambassadors," or as the margin says, "envoys." Either way, they pretended to be from a far country and to have the authority to enter into a covenant peace treaty with Israel on behalf of that country. Again, next time we will look at the details of that, but here it is enough to say that we need to be careful what ambassadors we allow into a peace treaty with our own homes.

What you watch on TV can imply a peace treaty with the worldview of the movie you are watching, or the talkshow host you find to be entertaining - *unless* you have a discussion afterwards of what you disagreed with and turn it into an educational opportunity. There is a place for that. And children especially can be vulnerable to this. The unstated assumption that children might make when you state that you love a movie is that you endorse everything in it. We must be very careful with what our children see us at peace with and what things they realize that we are still at war with. They need to understand the clear antithesis that we have with the world.

But let me sum up with four lessons that we can take home:

- 1) First, Satan never stops fighting and we should never let down our guard. The moment you stop moving forward, the likelihood is that you will slide backward.
- 2) Second, we need to realize that Satan changes his tactics to take us off guard. We have a major success and then we let down our guard and think we can coast. And then Satan comes at us at an oblique angle and takes us off guard.
- 3) Third, Satan loves to make us fearful since fear robs us of faith. If you are a fearful person, you have got to systematically eradicate fear from your life and replace it with confidence, love, joy, faith, and a sound mind.
- 4) And fourth, Satan loves to woo us into a peace treaty with people and things that are still at war with God. Don't do it.

I am making you aware of these things (as Paul worded it in 2 Corinthians 2:10) “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” May each of us be able to say, “we are not ignorant of his strategies.” Don’t be taken in by the bad cop, good cop techniques of Satan. Resist him on all angles. Amen.