

David Extends Kindness to Mephibosheth

2 Samuel 9

2 Samuel 9 - "Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" ² And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" He said, "At your service!" ³ Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet." ⁴ So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar."

⁵ Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. ⁶ Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "Here is your servant!" ⁷ So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." ⁸ Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"

⁹ And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. ¹⁰ You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do."

"As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table^[a] like one of the king's sons." ¹² Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³ So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet."

Background Notes

In establishing and expanding his kingdom, David first conquered Jerusalem and made it his new, well-defended capital city. Then he made Jerusalem the religious center of the nation by bringing the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem and placing it in a special tent, where it remained until the Temple was built. In 2 Samuel 8, David expanded and solidified the kingdom by conquering and subduing all of the surrounding enemy countries, including the Arameans in the far north. So, Israel controlled all of the land from Egypt in the south to Euphrates in the north, the land God had given to Abraham and his descendants under the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15).

In 2 Samuel 9, David remembered the covenant that he made with his good friend, Jonathan, King Saul's son. Out of loyalty to Jonathan, David honored that covenant. A number of years had gone by, because Mephibosheth had become a young son (v12), and he was only five years old when his father, Jonathan, and grandfather, King Saul, were killed in battle (2 Samuel 4:4). Now that the dynasty of King Saul had been completely removed, David was in a position to make good on the covenant he had made with Jonathan.

Ziba, who seems to have been the chief steward of Saul's estate, informed David of the whereabouts and welfare of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. David brought Mephibosheth to the palace and overwhelmed him with loving-kindness. 2 Samuel 9 is one of the most heartwarming stories in the Bible. It's a wonderful spiritual picture of God's unconditional love for us, and His wonderful plan of salvation by grace.

Doctrinal Points

1. Forgiveness and restoration are provided for all in salvation.

The following are some excerpts from an article on 2 Samuel 9 that I wrote several years ago. These quotes are from the *Devotions for Growing Christians* issue entitled "Mephibosheth and Me":

"The verbal picture that God has painted for us in this chapter of His Word could be entitled "Mephibosheth and Me." In it we see ourselves in the figure of Mephibosheth—the "me" that's been overwhelmed by the love of One who is greater than David, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Mephibosheth was a grandson of King Saul, the first king of Israel. Saul was the king who started out well but then turned away from the Lord. He not only stopped following the Lord, but he plotted to get rid of David, the Lord's anointed king. Thus, there was alienation and enmity between David and the dynasty of Saul. As a member of the deposed house of Saul, Mephibosheth deserved nothing from King David. In those days when a new dynasty came into power, the king would quickly put to death any possible rival threats to the throne. The best Mephibosheth could hope for was exile! But David showed mercy to Mephibosheth, and he even treated him as a prince and member of his own household! Even the "embarrassment" of having a crippled member of a deposed dynasty in the royal courts did not in any way affect David's gracious treatment of Mephibosheth. What a fascinating and amazing picture of the undeserved mercy and over-whelming grace, which God has shown us!

"The fallen dynasty of Saul is a picture of fallen mankind. Mankind was created by God and given a kingly position in God's creation. But, like Saul, man turned away from the Lord in disobedience and fell from his royal position into sin. Thus, as Romans 5:12 states, sin and its penalty of death were passed on to all mankind. *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned."*

"We, like Mephibosheth, were born into a fallen dynasty. Like Mephibosheth, we were by lineage under the sentence of exile and death. And, like Mephibosheth, we could do nothing to help ourselves out of our predicament. The fact that Mephibosheth was lame in both feet further adds to the picture of helplessness. Perhaps the fall that caused

Mephibosheth's handicap is also intended by God to be part of the picture of our fallen state. (See 2 Samuel 4:4.) Even Mephibosheth's name adds to the portrayal of fallen man. His name means "shameful speech from my mouth." As we look back over our lives, all of us must admit that this name is a fitting description of "me."

The alienation and enmity that separated Mephibosheth from David because of Mephibosheth's connection with the fallen dynasty of Saul, were completely overcome by David. In the same way that David reached across all the barriers that separated himself from Mephibosheth, so God has overcome all obstacles to reconcile us to himself. He has extended His love to us in spite of the alienating barriers of enmity and hostility that we had erected as members of the fallen human race. Colossians 1:21-22 captures this truth precisely: *"And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach..."*

Notice that David took the initiative in searching out Mephibosheth. How characteristic of our sovereign Lord! **He** took the initiative, and **He** found us - not the other way around, as some people erroneously state! Until He began to work in our hearts, our idea of God and our attitude towards Him were probably similar to that of Mephibosheth's attitude towards David – someone to fear and someone to hide from, so as to avoid confrontation. But Mephibosheth came to know and appreciate the love and kindness of the king who sought and found him. In the same way, we have come to know and experience the love and compassion of the King who came to "seek and to save those who are lost" (Luke 19:10). What a beautiful picture God has given us in this account!

The covenant between David and Jonathan reminds us of the covenant of loyal love that God has made with the fallen dynasty of mankind. Throughout the Old Testament we see God's unconditional commitment to the covenant of love He has given to sinful mankind. Right after Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, God covenanted to send a Redeemer to rescue fallen man. In Genesis 3:15, the first promise of the coming Redeemer was given: God promised that the seed of the woman would crush Satan's head. God's loyal and steadfast love for mankind is certainly seen when He preserved the human race at the time of Noah, and again when He promised to bless all the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham. Ultimately, of course, we see God's covenantal love for man focused in the giving of His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As Jonathan, a member of the house of Saul, was the link between David's love and Mephibosheth's need, so the Lord Jesus, a member of the human race, was the necessary link between God's love and our great need.

Verse 7 says that all the crown properties that once belonged to Saul and his dynasty would be returned to Mephibosheth by royal decree. This is one more detail of the beautiful picture that highlights God's love for fallen man. As part of the fallen, sinful race we had lost everything, and we were under the sentence of death. But in Christ we have regained our status of righteousness - and so much more! We have been brought into the family of God and given every blessing heaven has to offer. What a gracious plan of salvation! Forgiveness and restoration are provided for all in salvation.

2. Believing and receiving are all that is required for salvation.

Many people think that they must somehow earn their salvation by their good works, or buy their salvation by giving to the church or to charity. Nothing could be further from the truth! As Mephibosheth was helpless and hopeless and had nothing that could earn David's favor, so we are helpless and hopeless when it comes to earning God's favor by our own merits. But praise the Lord - believing and receiving are all that is required for salvation!

Again, a paragraph from the issue of *Devotions for Christians* entitled Mephibosheth and Me: "Mephibosheth's attitude and response when David discovered him is very significant in this picture of God's salvation. Even before Mephibosheth knew what David had planned, he prostrated himself and said, *"Here is your servant."* He didn't try to justify himself or make excuses for his connection with Saul or throw the blame for his situation on others. In the same way, we had to come before God with a "dead dog" or "servant" attitude in order to benefit from His mercy. In the Hebrew culture, there wasn't anything much lower than a dead dog. Many people today are unwilling to assume such a humble attitude, and thus their humanistic pride and arrogance keep them from experiencing the love and blessings of the King. Let us, the Mephibosheths who are now eating at the King's table, reach out to them in love and compassion with the King's official invitation. He wants them to join us in the picture of Mephibosheth and Me."

Believing and receiving are all that is required for salvation.

Practical Application

Praise the Lord, our crippled feet are covered forever!

"As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons" (v12). And "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet" (v13). As Mephibosheth sat at David's royal table, could you tell that he was crippled? No, because his lameness was covered by the table – the "table" of David's grace.

Do you see this aspect of the spiritual picture that God has given us? Our crippled condition that was caused by sin has been covered by God's grace – our sin will be remembered no more. Ephesians 2:6-7 says, *"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."* Because of His great grace, our position before God right now is one of righteousness, the perfect righteousness of Christ. Praise the Lord, our crippled feet are covered forever!