

## The King of Love and Grace 2 Samuel 9

I have the best, the most important and the happiest story to tell you. And when you hear it, you'll want to tell others. So, turn in our Bibles to 2 Samuel 9.

### Introduction:

The first time we read about Mephibosheth is in 2 Samuel 4:4 when the Scripture tells us

*Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.*

In other words, Mephibosheth, was five years old when both his grandfather, Saul and his father, Jonathan, David's best friend, died at the Battle of Mount Gilboa ensuring that David would become king.

Hearing of their deaths and suspecting that David would eliminate all of Saul's heirs, potential threats to David's throne, Mephibosheth's nurse took him and fled in panic. In her haste, the child fell, or was dropped while fleeing. After that, he was unable to walk for the rest of his life.

Thereafter, David continued to fight battles until all of Saul's forces, other rebels and enemies of Israel had been defeated. It's not until chapter 8 that David eventually begins his reign over Israel and that brings us immediately to chapter nine.

*And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"<sup>2</sup> Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant."<sup>3</sup> And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet."<sup>4</sup> The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar."*

*Lo-debar was a ghetto town in biblical times. Its name means, 'no pasture.'*

<sup>5</sup> Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. <sup>6</sup> And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant."<sup>7</sup> And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always."<sup>8</sup> And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"<sup>9</sup> Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson."<sup>10</sup> And you

*and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. <sup>11</sup> Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do.” So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. <sup>12</sup> And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. <sup>13</sup> So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.*

### **First: This is a Story of Love**

To understand why David loves Mephibosheth, you have to understand the story of David and Jonathan

**1 Samuel 18:1-4** - *As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. <sup>2</sup> And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. <sup>4</sup> And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.*

- a) Robe = position
- b) Armor = protection

You may remember that when God made his covenant with Abram (Gen 15), he changed his name to Abraham (Gen 17:5), giving Abram a part of his own name. He did the same thing with Sarai, changing her name to Sarah.<sup>1</sup>

In like manner, Jonathan's name probably became Jonathan David and David became David Jonathan. And it is out of David's love for Jonathan, that he shows kindness to Mephibosheth.

Can you imagine Mephibosheth's world? Until Saul's death, everyone has been saying, “*Find David, kill David.*” Now David is king! They're wondering, “*When will the retaliation begin? When will David take vengeance on Saul's house?*” This is how Mephibosheth came to be crippled, hidden, exiled.

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<sup>1</sup> From Adam Clarke's commentary: “Abram אַבְרָם literally signifies a high or exalted father. Ab -ra - ham אַבְרָהָם differs from the preceding only in one letter; it has ה he before the last radical. [...] Clarius and others think that the ה 'he', which is one of the letters of the Tetragrammaton, (or word of four letters, יְהוָה YeHoVaH), was added for the sake of dignity, God associating the patriarch more nearly to himself, by thus imparting to him a portion of his own name.”

How many times the child must have asked,

*"Why am I here?"*

*"You're here because someone's trying to kill you."*

*"Why am I crippled?"*

*"Because David hates you."*

*"What's going to happen?"*

*"We are hiding and hope the king never finds you. If he does, he will kill us all."*

Mephibosheth grew up with this lesson embedded in his heart and mind: *fear David, hate David, hide from David*. There he is in Lo-debar, dragging his crippled limbs, breathing and eating dust, drinking from a tin cup; a prince in exile.

But David doesn't hate Mephibosheth. And he loves Jonathan.

The point is that Mephibosheth, whom David didn't know and who didn't know David, is the recipient of David's love for Jonathan.

We receive God's love when the Father asks, *"Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"* (9:1)

We receive kindness, not because of who we are. If we received what we deserved because of who we are, it would be eternal banishment from God and his palace. But, we receive kindness for Jesus's sake; not because of who we are – *the narrator makes sure of that in the last line of his story* - but who Jesus is!

### **Second: This is a story of Grace**

Mephibosheth's story is certainly one of grace. He was David's enemy, like we were enemies of God (Ro 5:6). And yet, David extended grace to him, even when he, unable to walk, was of no profit to David.

Mephibosheth knew this. His name means, *'from the mouth of shame.'* How could he even speak to David? Every true word he spoke – *"I am Saul's grandson and Jonathan's son"* – only condemned him to death all-the-more.

He knows that he is a *'dead dog'* in David's sight when confronted with the king's kindness (2 Sam 9:8).

The narrator wants us to understand the magnitude of David's gesture and so he concludes the story saying, *"he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet"* (9:13). In these lines, David's grace toward Mephibosheth is magnified.

What David extended to Mephibosheth is rooted in the word:

**Kindness (2 Sam 9:1) = *chesed*** = (No single English word can translate it) / *goodness, kindness, mercy, favor, lovingkindness*

*In the NT, it is:*

*Grace = charis = good will, favor, loving-kindness*

The story of Mephibosheth is an OT video of a NT snapshot – that of grace

**Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.***

Take that verse and use it as filter to read Mephibosheth's story and you will better understand grace.

### **Third: This is a story of Electing Love and Grace**

(I know that some of you are hesitant about that word '*elect*' or '*election*' but it is a Bible word and one that, if we understand it, will enhance our understanding of the gospel and our evangelism).

Underneath the dirt, grime and brokenness, who really is Mephibosheth?

#### **Mephibosheth is a prince in exile**

It isn't just any cripple that David saves. There were innumerable cripples in Israel at that time. No, it is Jonathan's son that David saves.

*9:1 - "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"*

Remember I told you to remember what Lo-debar means = '*no pasture.*' Here is lamb from Jonathan's flock who has wandered away.

Think about the parable of the lost sheep. It wasn't just any lost sheep that the Shepherd went to find in the parable of the good shepherd. No, it was one of his own sheep.

**Luke 15:4-6 - *What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?*<sup>5</sup> *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*<sup>6</sup> *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'***

It's the same in each of the Luke 15 parables:

- 1 – It is the shepherd’s sheep that is lost and found
- 2 – It is the woman’s coin that is lost and found
- 3 – It is the father’s son who is lost and found

This is good news. There are lost sheep, coins, sons and princes for whom Jesus died, everywhere, just waiting to be found!

This is the good news:

- a) When your children bear witness to their own Fall in a lack of kindness, patience, empathy, gentleness, remember they are princes and princesses in exile: children to whom God will show kindness for Jesus’s sake. Let that thought direct your parenting of misbehaving children. They are kings and queens of another world.
- b) Remember there are people in the world whom God, as a good Shepherd, is looking for and will find. There are children who cannot walk to him, whom the King is searching for to show kindness. All they need to know is that the King loves them, he is looking for them and they are welcome home.

Who will accept that invitation? We don’t know, so we tell everyone. But rest assured, God the king, and God the shepherd, is looking for them, he will find them, and they will come home to the pasture or castle. We go out into the world with the confident joy of that good news –

*“You are a prince in exile,”*  
*“You are a princess in exile”*

for anyone and everyone who will accept the King’s loving and gracious invitation!!!

**Third: Mephibosheth’s story is one of a King of love and grace**

There are some people who are not Christians who may think, ‘My fall is too great. My feet are too marred.’

Others, as Christians, are regularly overwhelmed by sins of the past or by sin’s dominance.

**This is not a story about favor and not feet.**

**We must constantly look to the king’s face and not our feet.**

Or as the apostle Paul might say, *“where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”* (Ro 5:20).

It’s very interesting that David’s primary gift to Mephibosheth is that –

*“you will eat at my table always” (9:7) and*

*“Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall always eat at my table” (9:10b)*

*“So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king’s table” (9:11a)*

Three times this passage reminds us that David’s love and grace toward Mephibosheth is demonstrated by the young boy eating at the king’s table. Why?

Because when Mephibosheth is seated, you can’t tell that he’s lame. He looks just like everyone else. It’s as if he’s been made whole.

Is he whole? No, but to David, it looks that way. Are we whole? No, we are still cripples enabled by God’s graceful crutches. But one day.....

Most importantly, as they sit together at the king’s table, David sees Jonathan in the face of Mephibosheth. And God the Father sees Jesus, in his perfection, when he looks on us, still in our imperfection.

### **Conclusion:**

It is one of the most wonderful stories in the Bible and it really happened. A king welcomed his enemy, a broken boy to sit at his table like a prince restored to his kingdom.

It’s your story. It’s my story. And, if you have never trusted Jesus to see you as perfect, it can be your story too.

### **Community Group Leaders:**

- 1 – How are you doing during this Covid-19 pandemic?
- 2 – How is your home life?
- 3 – What frustrates you most about living in this pandemic?
- 4 – How have you seen God work during this time?
- 5 – Think about our text in 2 Samuel 9
- 6 – Set up the story in 2 Samuel 9 by reviewing 2 Samuel 4:4
- 7 – What do we know about Mephibosheth?
- 8 – Why is David’s kindness toward Mephibosheth so unique for his world?
- 9 – How do you think Mephibosheth reacted when he heard David was looking for him?
- 10 – Why does the text tell us that David show kindness to Mephibosheth?
- 11 – For more on David and Jonathan’s story, read 1 Samuel 18:1-4
- 12 – How does Ephesians 2:8-9 picture this story of David’s love and grace to Mephibosheth?
- 13 – How does election encourage evangelism?
- 14 – Why is it important for Mephibosheth to focus on David’s favor and not his feet?

15 – Why is it important for us to focus on God’s love and grace and not our sin? (Although there’s certainly a place to consider our sin and daily repent of it)

16 – What do you think is important about the text saying three times that Mephibosheth sat at David’s table?

17 – How are we whole and yet, not yet whole? (Sinners and saints simultaneously) – This is a place to discuss the three tenses of salvation

1 – We are saved from the penalty of sin

2 – We are being saved from the power of sin

3 – We will one day be saved from the presence of sin

And to also discuss positional vs practical perfection.

1 - We are positionally perfect because God sees us in Jesus. (When Mephibosheth sits at the table, he looks whole)

2 - We are practically imperfect because we still sin. (If Mephibosheth tries to walk, his fallenness is easily visible)