



## Lesson 70: David cares for a friend

### From: The Life of David - Volume 1, AW Pink

#### Chapter 47

#### His Kindness to Mephibosheth

#### 2 Samuel 9

2 Samuel 9; presents to us one of the loveliest scenes in the life of David. To appreciate it properly we need to recall his earlier experiences, particularly the unkind treatment he received from the hands of Saul. We will only refer briefly now to the jealousy which was awakened in that king's heart when he heard the women celebrating in song the victory of Jesse's youthful son over Goliath. How that later he sought to kill David again and again by throwing a javelin at him. Finally, how that David had to flee for his life and how relentlessly the king pursued him, determining to kill him. But things had been completely altered. Saul and his sons were slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne of Israel. A most admirable spirit did our hero now display: instead of using his royal power tyrannically or maliciously, he put it to a most noble use: to return good for evil, to extend pity to the descendant of his foe, to befriend one who might well have feared death at his hands, was David's next act.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1). First of all let us observe the pathos of such a question. 1 Chronicles 8:33 furnishes a list of Saul's sons, but now his family had been so reduced by the judgments of God that inquiry has to be made "is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul?" How true it is that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children"—O that more parents would take this to heart. But, second, let us note the benevolent design of David: he sought any possible survivor of Saul's family, not that he might imprison or slay, but that he might show him "kindness." It was no passing whim which had actuated him. "Jonathan" was before his heart, and for his "sake" he was determined to show clemency and display his magnanimity. At length they brought to David an old retainer of Saul's family, who knew well the sad state into which it was fallen; and to him also David said, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Samuel 9:3).

But beautiful as was David's conduct on this occasion, something yet more blessed was shadowed forth by it, and upon that we would particularly concentrate our attention. As other writers on this sweet incident have pointed out, David as monarch over Israel suggests to us God upon His throne in heaven: David showing kindness to the family of his archenemy, foreshadowed God's dealing in grace with sinners. The name of the one whom David befriended, the place he had hitherto occupied, the condition he was then in, the wondrous portion he received, all typified the case of those upon whom God bestows saving mercy. The picture here presented is perfect in its accuracy in every detail, and the more closely it be examined, the more clearly will its evangelical character appear. O that our hearts may be melted by its exquisite light and shade.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Let us first observe that David was the one who here took the initiative. No overtures were made unto him by the one remaining descendant of Saul; the king himself was the one to make the advance. So it is in the antitype: it is not the sinner, but God, who makes the first move. Through the Gospel He makes overtures of mercy, and in each instance of salvation He is found of them that seek Him not. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6), and it is the nature of a lost sheep to wander farther and farther afield. The shepherd must do the seeking, for sheep astray never go after the shepherd—true alike both naturally and spiritually. It was God who sought out Abraham in Ur, Jacob at Bethel, Moses in Midian, Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and not they who sought unto Him.

Next, we may notice the object of David's quest. It was not one who had befriended him during the days of his own dire need. Nor was it one whom men of the world would call "a deserving case." Nor was it one from whom David could expect anything again in return. Instead, it was one immediately descended from his most merciless and implacable foe; it was one who was hiding away from him; it was one who had nothing of his own, having lost his heritage. How accurate the picture The Gospel of God's grace is not seeking those who have something of their own to commend them unto the Lord, nor does it offer salvation in return for service to be rendered afterwards. Its inestimable riches are for worthless wretches, spiritual paupers, lost and undone sinners; and those riches are freely proffered "without money and without price."

But let us pay attention to the motive which actuated David. Very beautiful is this line in our typical picture. "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake." Here was what moved the king to make overtures of mercy toward the house of his sworn enemy. Though there was nothing whatever in Saul's survivor to commend him unto the royal favour, David found a reason outside of him, in that bond of love and friendship which existed between his own heart and Jonathan. And thus it is too in the antitype: "For we ourselves also were sometime Foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But after that the kindness and pity of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:3-6). It is because of Another that God is gracious to His people: "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

One more item completes this point, and a very striking one it is. When Zeba, Saul's servant, had been found and brought to David, the king asked, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Samuel 9:3). This language goes further than his words in the first verse. It takes us back to 1 Samuel 20. There we find Jonathan acted the part of a mediator between Saul and David (2 Samuel 9:27-34). There too we read of a solemn "covenant" (2 Samuel 9:16-17, 42) between Jonathan and David, in which the latter swore to show kindness unto the house of the former forever: "Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul" (2 Samuel 9:17). It was to that incident the words of David "that I may show the kindness of God unto him" looked back: it was that kindness of which God Himself had been the witness; it was covenant "kindness" which he had promised to exercise.

Thus, the one who here obtained kindness at the hands of the king, received favour not because of anything he had done, nor because of any personal worthiness he possessed, but wholly on account of a covenant promise which had been made before he was born. So it is with those toward whom

God now acts in free and sovereign grace. It is not because of any personal claims they have upon Him, but because of the love He bears toward the Mediator, that He shows "kindness." Nor is that all: long, long before they first saw the light, God entered into a covenant with Christ, promising to extend mercy unto all who belonged to His "house": "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). It is "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" that God makes His people "perfect in every good work to do His will" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Next, let us look more closely at this one to whom David showed "the kindness of God"—covenant-kindness. First, his name, for no detail here is meaningless. The son of Jonathan was called "Mephibosheth" (2 Samuel 9:6), which signifies "a shameful thing." How accurately does that appellation describe the natural man! "We are all as an unclean thing" (Isaiah 64:6) says God's Word—polluted by sin. We are by birth and practice thoroughly depraved and corrupt. Our understanding is darkened so that we cannot apprehend spiritual things, our will are opposed to God's, our hearts are desperately wicked, our consciences are seared, our strength spent in the service of Satan; and in the sight of the Holy One our very righteousnesses are "as filthy rags." "A shameful thing," then, we truly are: "from the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head there is no soundness" in us by nature, but instead "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" (Isaiah 1:6). O what cause have we to cry with the leper "Unclean! unclean!" and say with Job "I am vile."

Second, Mephibosheth was a fugitive from David. When news reached the survivors of his family that Saul and his sons had been slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne, Mephibosheth and his nurse fled in terror: "he was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled" (2 Samuel 4:4). They were anxious to keep out of David's way. So it is with the sinner, he is afraid of God, and seeks to banish Him from his thoughts. The knowledge of God's holiness, power and omniscience fills him with dismay, and he seeks to have nothing to do with Him. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."

Third, Mephibosheth was a cripple. He was "lame of his feet" (2 Samuel 4:4): as the closing words of our Chapter states, he "was lame on both his feet" (2 Samuel 9:13). How accurately that portrays the condition of those who are out of Christ! The natural man is unable to run in the path of God's commandments, or tread the narrow way which leadeth unto Life. He is a spiritual cripple; "without strength" (Romans 5:6). The utter inability of the unregenerate to meet God's requirements and walk acceptably before him, is a truth written plain across the Scriptures, though it is given little place indeed in much modern preaching. The greatness of man, the freedom of his will, his ability to accept Christ any time, is now the sweet opiate which is chloroforming millions. "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44): how those words of Christ's attest the solemn fact that the sinner is "lame of both his feet"!

Fourth, Mephibosheth became a cripple through a fall: "and his nurse took him up and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee that he fell, and became lame" (2 Samuel 4:4). What a truly marvellous book the Bible is! Yet how it needs eyes anointed by the Divine Inspirer to perceive its wonders and beauties! How obvious it is to those favoured with spiritual discernment that we have here far more than an historical account pertaining to a single individual: that it is rather a typical picture having a universal application. Man was not originally created in the condition he is now in. Man was far from being "lame on both his feet" when his Maker proclaimed him "very good." The

faculties of mans soul have become spiritually crippled as the result of the fall—our fall in Adam. In consequence of that fall, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8).

Fifth, the place where Mephibosheth resided. It was not at Jerusalem, no, indeed; none out of Christ live there. Jerusalem signifies "the foundation of peace" and as Holy Writ truly declares, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22): how can there be while they despise Him in whom alone peace is to be found? "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20)—discontented, dissatisfied. No, it was not at Jerusalem that poor Mephibosheth resided. Instead, he dwelt at "Lodebar" (2 Samuel 9:4), which means, "the place of no pasture." What a significant line in our picture is this, so obviously drawn by more than a human artist. How aptly does it portray the world in which we live, the world which is away from God, which lieth in the wicked one. It is a world which provides no food for the soul: it is a great "howling wilderness" so far as spiritual provisions are concerned. Yet how little is that fact realized by those who are in it and of it.

"Lodebar" is written across all the varied fields of this world, though the great masses of people realize it not. Multitudes are seeking to find something to fill that void in the heart which God should occupy. They seek satisfaction in sport, in novel reading, in an endless round of pleasure, in making money, in fame; but soul satisfaction is not to be found in such things—things which perish with the using of them. Despising Him who is "the true Bread," the "Bread of life," no food is to be found here but "the husks that the swine" feed upon. The prodigal son discovered that when he left his patrimony and went into the far country: "I perish with hunger" was his plaintive cry. Life, peace, joy, satisfaction, are to be found only in the Lord.

One other point and we must conclude this Chapter: the provision David made for Mephibosheth. There was this poor creature, belonging to a family that was in rebellion against David, lame in both feet, and dwelling in the place of no pasture. And here was the king upon his throne, with purpose of heart to show him kindness for the sake of another. What, then, was the next move? Did David send a message of welcome, inviting him to come to Jerusalem? Did he notify Mephibosheth that if he "did his part" mercy should be accorded him? Did he forward the cripple a pair of crutches, bid him make use of them, and hobble to Jerusalem as best he could? No, indeed; had anything like that been David's policy, our typical picture had failed completely to exhibit "the kindness of God" unto those on whom He bestows His so great salvation. God does much more than provide "means of grace."

"Then king David sent and fetched him" (2 Samuel 9:5). This blessed item shadows forth the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in those whom God brings unto Himself. Had He done nothing more than give His Son to die for sinners, and then sent forth His servants with the gospel invitation, none had ever been saved. This is clear from the parable of the Great Supper: men were bade to come and assured that "all things were now ready." And what was their response? This, "they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18). But God was not to be foiled, and said to the servant (the Spirit), "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Thank God for bringing grace; that He does all, both for and in His people.

'Twas the same grace that spread the feast,  
That gently forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.