

David, Part 10 1-30-22

Dead Dog Dining

II Samuel 9 where we have one of the most beautiful images of redemption in all of literature. By “image” I mean “allegory” – a story with parallels to another set of facts. For example, the story of Joseph, Old Testament Joseph, is a true story that is an allegory. Sovereign Gods can do this. Joseph is a picture of Jesus Christ in that he is beloved by his father, betrayed by his jealous brothers for silver, unjustly thrown into a prison from which he rose to sit at the king’s right hand. In that position of authority, he brought deliverance to many, even his hateful brothers. The parallels to Jesus are striking. And so, it is in our chapter for the one who has written the story of redemptive history and given us his record of that story has woven certain patterns in the cloth of history that we might look at the whole and recognize it to be the handiwork of our almighty tailor to whom belongs glory forever.

Today we consider an account from the life of David that is startling in its depiction of gospel truths. I hope it grabs your affections as it has mine and that you leave here with a new name etched upon your mind, the name of a Biblical character called Mephibosheth. II Samuel 9:1-13 *Then David said, “Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”* ²*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.”* ³*The king said, “Is there not yet anyone 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 crippled in both feet.”* ⁴*So the king said to him, “Where is he?” And Ziba said to the king, “Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.”* ⁵*Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.* ⁶*Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, “Mephibosheth.” And he said, “Here is your servant!”* ⁷*David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.”* ⁸*Again he prostrated himself and said, “What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?”* ⁹*Then the king called Saul’s servant Ziba and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson.* ¹⁰*You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master’s grandson may*

have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. ¹²Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. ¹³So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet.

Our drama today has two main characters and two or three supporting actors. The latter we will bring up as needed, but the two stars are – First, King David of Israel. We have been learning all about him. Star #2 is Mephibosheth. Not exactly a household word. He is, as we learn, a son of Jonathan, the son of David's predecessor and antagonist, King Saul. The distinguishing characteristic of Mephibosheth is that he is crippled in both feet. II Samuel 4:4 *Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.* This becomes quite significant, so the inspired author of our book included this note here to fill in the details of Mephibosheth's story. Now, I have said this is a non-fictional allegory. So, the characters must represent something and they do. David, the king parallels God, the king of heaven, and Mephibosheth parallels the Christian, or any sinner saved by grace.

To unfold the drama in as useful a way as possible I have developed two major headings with some overlap. They are, #1 – what the king does; and #2 how Mephibosheth responds. First then we look at what the king does. 1 *David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"* David has subdued his enemies in chapter 8. He has brought security to Israel and is ready to turn his attention to domestic affairs. So, the king, in the secure power of his kingdom turns his heart towards mercy and then in 3a *The king said, "Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?"* And we have read of the way David showed this kindness to Mephibosheth.

Several things here give us insight into what David is doing. First of all, we should understand how strange an act this was on the part of David. He does not look around and say, *Who is there who has benefitted my kingdom that I may show him honor?* What's he looking for? A son or relative of Saul. You remember Saul? He was the one who owed David everything, his life and his kingdom but instead of exalting him, tried to kill him, once, twice, numerous times. Saul drove

David out of his homeland. He was an arch-villain and David looks for one of his relatives to show mercy.

Beyond that, Saul was David's forerunner as king. In ancient time and still often today, when a new king comes to power he completely wipes out the family and even the friends of the former king. The new king wants no rivals to the throne so the former king's family had to go. In certain cases, a relative may be allowed to live. Mephibosheth, due to his condition, may have been considered no threat, but just to let him live would have been considered mercy and David goes way, way beyond that.

I suppose what I would have you see is that David's mercy and kindness were remarkable primarily because of whom it was towards. And the same is true of God's saving mercy in Jesus. John Newton says God's grace is what? Amazing. Why? Because it saved a wretch like me. Mephibosheth surely recognized that he was the last person on earth deserving of the king's favor. He was the grandson of David's great enemy. When he was brought to David he was brought with fear. Sure he was afraid. He was terrified. And, after he heard the king's sweet words it says in 8 *he prostrated himself and said, "What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?"* What was Mephibosheth? A son of David's enemy, Saul. Saul, in our story, is parallel to Adam. As a son of Adam, you and I are in trouble and under the curse of God. We are dead dogs. Not cute dogs. Not lucky dogs. Not good dogs. We are dead dogs. That is, we are enemies of the Almighty. What could be worse than that?

Now, I know when I say we are enemies of God many think, *Come on, that's not true and the preacher on TV never says that.* But God's word says it. Ephesians 2:3 *We too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath.* Colossians 1:21 *you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.* Romans 5 calls us enemies of God. The point is that God's mercy is so great because it's directed towards his enemies. David would have been thought just to kill Mephibosheth and God would be just to condemn us all.

David, instead of executing Mephibosheth, made him a son of sorts. Incredible! And what a picture of what God has done for us in Jesus. Why did God do it? Ephesians 2:4 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.* We established last Sunday that God loves us because he loves us – period. What do you think led David to show mercy to a dead dog like Mephibosheth? I think one answer to that is that David recognized God's grace to him, that is to David. We saw last time how he was blown away by the goodness of

God to an unworthy shepherd. He cried out, “Who am I?” And I think he knew that he stood before God as Mephibosheth did before him and David had mercy. David loved because God loved. Ephesians 4:32-5:2 *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you.* We love as Jesus loves and because Jesus loves. II Samuel 9:3a *The king said, “Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?”* Whose kindness? Not David’s kindness. David says he just wants to show off the kindness he learned from God. Amen. Put me down for that. This is what we are to show others – the kindness of God. So, note this, the king first of all shows mercy to a son of his enemy.

Secondly now, notice that the king sought out Mephibosheth. David’s mercy was a seeking mercy, not the kind that just sat back and waited for Mephibosheth to come plead for grace. Not a passive mercy. God’s is a seeking mercy as well. Thankfully our Lord isn’t simply willing to be gracious when men pursue him. Oh no! God’s mercy seeks out its object. David asked, *“Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”* Whose idea was this? Not Mephibosheth’s, David’s. Notice – Mephibosheth does not seek David out. David sought him out. He sent for Mephibosheth. Does God do this with us? Absolutely. If all he did was wait for us we’d be in big trouble, but the divine physician makes house calls, the giver of life delivers and it’s a good thing because if you’re dead you can’t make it to the doctor’s. If God just waited for you, he would have a very long wait. Paul said in Romans that there is no one who naturally seeks for God. That’s why, in Ephesians 2, after painting this bleak picture of our sinful state, Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-5 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).* He sought us out. Jesus speaks of us as lost sheep. Did the sheep search out the shepherd? He speaks of the lost coin. Did the coin seek out the owner? Of course not. Jesus says that our God became man – why? To seek and save that which was lost. You and me – like Mephibosheth, sitting out there worthy of wrath, but the king came to save. He sent for us and brought us to his throne and to his house. The king showed a mercy that sought us out.

Now the big question is, “why did the king show mercy? Why this grace?” In David’s case he did it because of God’s grace to him, but there is another reason clearly asserted. 1 *“Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”* 7 *David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will*

*surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan.” Why did he show kindness? Not because Mephibosheth was a good fella, not because he was disabled, but for Jonathan’s sake. Clear enough. Maybe you know that even though Saul hated David, Saul’s son, Jonathan, became David’s closest friend. In I Samuel 20 we find Jonathan and David forming a covenant. Jonathan recognizes that David will one day become king and he says, I Samuel 20:14-17 *If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the Lord, that I may not die?* ¹⁵*You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.”* ¹⁶*So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the Lord require it at the hands of David’s enemies.”* ¹⁷*Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life. You get the point. Jonathan has David vow to show mercy to Jonathan’s house. And David keeps this vow, this covenant with his friend.**

So, what did Mephibosheth do to gain such favor? Not a thing, he was just related to David’s friend. Would it be okay to say that Mephibosheth was blessed because he was “in Jonathan?” that is, in his house? Maybe you see where I am headed. Parallel to David’s covenant with Jonathan, God the Father has made a covenant with his son. Jonathan who represents for us Jesus Christ was the son of Saul, the enemy of the king. Saul representing sinful Adam. And just as David made a covenant with the son of Saul who was his friend, so God made a covenant with the Son of Adam, (Adam means “man”), the son of man who was his friend. God has said to Jesus, *My favor is upon You and with all your house.* Primarily, God’s favor is upon Jesus. If you are his, if you are in him, you are blessed by virtue of that relationship. Mephibosheth was blessed for Jonathan’s sake. The Christian is blessed for Jesus’ sake. We are saved from wrath and led into the treasures of the king’s house if we are in Christ. The only ones who were saved from the flood were those in the ark. At that day of wrath only the ark floated. And on the day of judgment only Jesus will pass the test. He alone will float and those in him only will survive.

This is why the New Testament makes such a big deal over two words – “in Christ.” Whether or not you are in Christ makes a world of difference. If you are in him all that is his is yours. Ephesians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him. 7a In Him we have redemption. 13 In Him...you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. Everything is in Jesus. We are blessed only because of our relationship to Christ, just like Mephibosheth.*

The king showed mercy for Jonathan's sake and our king shows mercy for Jesus' sake. Praise the name of the Lord!

Well then, we have seen what the king does -- how does Mephibosheth respond? Mephibosheth remember is disabled. He represents lost humanity – at odds with the monarch and utterly helpless. That's where we are. It says he was lame in both feet. If you have one good foot you can stand and even hop, but Mephibosheth had two bad legs. Complete inability and as unconverted humans we have no ability at all. Apart from Christ we can do what? Nothing! Not a little something – nothing. We cannot please God, worship God, obey God or believe God. Our man Mephibosheth is brought. He doesn't walk to David, he is brought. And when he is he prostrated himself before David. Now, being Saul's grandson, and the only living heir to his throne, what do you think Mephibosheth expected David to do or say? He didn't fall down 'cause he was crippled – he was terrified and was seeking mercy. He expected wrath. The first thing David says to him was, *do not fear*. Mephibosheth was afraid. But David explains his gracious plans, including his intention to have Mephibosheth eat at his table. Wow! You talk about an unexpected word. It's like when some guy asks his sweetie to marry him and he expects her to laugh in his face, but she says, *I'd love to!* And bells go off, trumpets sound. Just incredible! This is far great. Expecting death and he became as a son of the king. Eating at the royal table was a signal privilege. Surely you can see the parallels to us. We enjoy the presence of the king. We sit at his table. So, what did Mephibosheth say? *What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?* It sounds like something we have heard before in our series. He is saying, "who am I? Why are you blessing unworthy me?" That is what David said two chapter prior. Both of these sinners are blown away by grace. And verse 11 says all that was promised came to pass.

Now, do you think Mephibosheth was going to take the king's mercy for granted? Let's fast forward to II Samuel 19. Absalom, David's son has revolted against his father and temporarily takes the throne, but David's armies have defeated Absalom's and David is coming back into Jerusalem. When David had left Jerusalem Mephibosheth had wanted to come, but his servant, hoping to obtain Mephibosheth's inheritance, lied to David and said, "Mephibosheth is staying in Jerusalem hoping to become king." David believe Ziba the servant and gave him Mephibosheth's portion of Saul's land. Ok? II Samuel 19:24 (NLT) *Now Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, came down from Jerusalem to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes since the day the king left Jerusalem. These are signs of mourning. 25-30 (NLT)* "Why didn't you

come with me, Mephibosheth?" the king asked him. ²⁶Mephibosheth replied, "My lord the king, my servant Ziba deceived me. I told him, 'Saddle my donkey so I can go with the king.' For as you know I am crippled. ²⁷Ziba has slandered me by saying that I refused to come. But I know that my lord the king is like an angel of God, so do what you think is best. ²⁸All my relatives and I could expect only death from you, my lord, but instead you have honored me by allowing me to eat at your own table! What more can I ask?" ²⁹"You've said enough," David replied. "I've decided that you and Ziba will divide your land equally between you." ³⁰"Give him all of it," Mephibosheth said. "I am content just to have you safely back again, my lord the king!" Wow! You see three things in Mephibosheth here that should be found in every child of God.

#1 – he had a deep gratitude for the goodness of the king. 28 *All my relatives and I could expect only death from you, my lord, but instead you have honored me by allowing me to eat at your own table! What more can I ask?*" Look at what you have done for a dead dog like me. Deep gratitude.

Secondly, we see in Mephibosheth his affection for the person of the king. In verse 29 David gives him back his portion of the land and he says, *All I care about is having you back, my lord. Who needs the land? I have you! His affection was not for the king's gifts but for the king himself. Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise, thou my inheritance now and always. Thou and thou only first in my heart. High king of heaven, my treasure thou art.* Mephibosheth had gratitude for the goodness of the king and affection for the person of the king.

Finally, he had zeal for the glory of the king. When Mephibosheth came to David he had not trimmed his nail or his beard or washed his clothes. When David was driven off the throne Mephibosheth went into mourning and he did not stop until David was back where he belonged. He could not bear to see his precious king dishonored and attacked. Oh, that we would have such hearts! The goodness of the king had led Mephibosheth to delight in the king's glory and weep at his betrayal. May the Spirit of Christ give us such a concern for the glory of him who love us and gave himself for us. If we saw ourselves as Mephibosheth saw himself. If we so admired the grace of our king, maybe, maybe we would have gratitude for the goodness of the king and affection for the person of the king and zeal for the glory of the king.