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## **David's Kindness To Mephibosheth**

BY THE LATE: C. D. COLE

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.

Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.

Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (II Sam. 9:1-7).

In the 9th chapter of II Samuel, we have one of the loveliest scenes in the life of David, King

of Israel. It is the story of his kindness to Mephibosheth, grandson of Saul, a descendant of his bitterest enemy. We see David returning good for evil and performing such a gracious deed as to remind us of the very grace of God. To properly appreciate David's gracious act, we must look at the dark background of his earlier experiences.

As a lad, when Saul was king of Israel, David visited the army of Saul and killed the giant, Goliath, who had repeatedly challenged the men of Saul's army. When David returned from this victory, the women sang his praises, saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This aroused the jealousy of Saul, and he eyed David with suspicion from that day forward.

David acted so wisely that Saul feared him. The people were so fond of David that Saul felt he had to resort to treachery to get rid of him. When David won the victory over Goliath, Saul would not let him return home, but had him live in the king's palace and associate with his own children. And it was while living there that Saul promised to give the young man his daughter, Merab, to wife on the condition that he would continue to kill Philistines. In this way he hoped David would himself be killed by the Philistines. But when the time came for him to have Merab to wife, Saul changed his mind and gave her to Adriel instead of to David. Then Saul decided to give another daughter, Michal, to David in hope she would be a snare to him and lead to his death. In all humility, David confessed he was not

worthy to be the king's son-in-law. Saul told him all the dowry he wanted was the scalps of 200 Philistines. And when David had slain the 200 Philistines, he had Michal to wife. Michal loved David and was not a snare but a great help and comfort to him.

Saul's anger increased and David finally had to flee for his life. And for years he was a fugitive and lived the life of a free-booter. But the table was finally turned and things became greatly altered. Saul and his sons were slain in battle, and David became king of Israel.

One of the first things David did after becoming king was to inquire into the condition of Saul's family to see if any member of the family was living to whom he might show kindness. This is in striking contrast with the usual procedure of men who triumph over their foes. It is usual for them to purge the house of their foes and use their power tyrannically and maliciously. We have examples of this in ancient and modern rulers. Hitler, Musolini, and Stalin, when they reached their power, eliminated every vestige of opposition and killed men by the thousands.

But the first act of David was benevolence to the house of Saul. We find him returning good for evil, and befriending one who might well have feared death at his hands. "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew kindness for Jonathan's sake?" There is pathos in this question. In I Chronicles, chapter 8, verse 33, there is a list of the sons of Saul in the years gone by, but now his family has 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?" Here is an illustration of how the sins of the father are visited upon the children. And all parents need to take this to heart and be warned by it.

Consider the benevolent design of David in this question. He did not inquire if any were left that he might seek vengeance against the house of Saul, his enemy, but that he might show them kindness of God. It appears that none of David's courtiers knew anything about the descendants of Saul. I imagine they supposed all of them to be dead. But David kept asking, "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Jonathan was ever before David, and for his sake, David was determined to show kindness.

Finally, they found an old servant of Saul's by the name of Ziba who knew well the sad state of Saul's house, and David put the question to him. "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I might shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" We have here the grace of God foreshadowed in David's conduct. David, as monarch of Israel, suggests to us God on His throne. David showing kindness to the family of his arch enemy reminds us of God's dealing in grace with sinners, forgiving them for the sake of His Son,

Jesus Christ. The name of the one whom David befriended, the place he once occupied, the sad state he was now in, and the wondrous blessing he received, all typify the case of the poor sinner saved by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ. Here is a cluster of several blessed truths!

1. David took the initiative in the matter. Nobody even suggested that he remember with kindness any member of the house of Saul. And no member of Saul's house approached him to beg for mercy. And it was like this in God's grace to sinners. God always takes the initiative. He finds them that seek him not. All we like sheep have gone astray, and a sheep left to itself, wanders farther and farther from the fold. And so it is with sinners. It was God Who sought Abram in Ur; it was God Who sought Jacob at Bethel; Moses at Midian, Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. And if you, my dear friend, are saved, it was God Who sought you while you were wandering in sin.

2. Consider the object of David's search. It was not one who had befriended him in his dire need. It was not one whom men would call a deserving case. Nor was it one from whom David could expect anything in return. Instead, it was a descendant of his most implacable foe; it was one who was hiding from him; one who had nothing of his own with which he could reward David. How accurate is the picture of God's redeeming grace! God's salvation is for sinners, for spiritual paupers, members of the human family who have hated Him, and who are hiding from Him. God's salvation is free, without money and without price.

3. Let us look at the motive which actuated David. "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I might shew kindness for Jonathan's sake?" It was for Jonathan's sake that David wished to befriend a worthless member of Saul's house. There was nothing in Saul's grandson to commend him to David. Notice in verse 8 of II Samuel 9, Mephibosheth speaking, "And he bowed himself, and said, 'What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?'" David found a reason in Jonathan. And it is thus when God saves a sinner. There is nothing in any sinner to commend him to God. God forgives sinners for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." It is for the sake of Jesus that God is gracious to sinners.

4. Something else we need to see. Why was David so desirous to do something for Jonathan's sake? We have to go deep into history to find out. Jonathan had loved David as his own soul, and had acted the part of mediator between his father and David. And Jonathan and David had entered into a solemn covenant, and according to this covenant, David had sworn to show kind-

ness for Jonathan's sake to the house of Saul. It was covenant kindness. David was keeping his promise to Jonathan.

And so God's kindness in saving sinners is covenant kindness. God entered into a covenant with His Son, Jesus Christ, back before the world was. Jesus is called the Surety of a better covenant. And in saving and keeping sinners, God is keeping His promise to His Son. God saves according to purpose. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

5. Let us look more closely at the one to whom David showed the kindness of God. First, his name, Mephibosheth, which means a shameful thing. And is this not true of the natural man, who by nature is a child of wrath? We are all as unclean things. By birth and practice we are polluted by sin and filthy to the Holy eyes of God. Moral filth is not as easily discerned by us as it is by God. But everyone of us might well say with Job, "I am vile."

Second, Mephibosheth was a fugitive from David. When news reached the household of Saul—that he and his sons were dead on the field of battle, and that David had ascended the throne of Israel, Mephibosheth was but a baby and his nurse fled with him in terror. They were anxious to keep out of David's way. And so it is with the sinner. He is a fugitive from God. He wants to keep out of God's way. He does not want to be reminded of God. He may give a dozen alibis for not coming to church, but here is the real reason: he does not want to face God in song and sermon.

Third, Mephibosheth was a cripple. He was lame on both feet. He had experienced a fall. When his nurse fled with him as a 5 year old child, she dropped him and made a cripple of him. And this is the natural man's condition. He has had a fall. He is a spiritual cripple. He cannot walk in the way of God's commandments. He cannot please God. He cannot even come to Christ. He has to be drawn by the Spirit.

Fourth, the place where Mephibosheth lived. It was at Lodebar, which signifies "the place of no pasture." Surely the parallel between Mephibosheth and the lost sinner has not been drawn by any human artist. The sinner is in this world, the place of no pasture, a dry and thirsty land where no water is. This world provided no food for the sinner, nothing in the world to satisfy the thirsty soul. The world is a great howling wilderness so far as any soul provisions are concerned.

Fifth, the provision David made for Mephibosheth. Did David send a messenger to invite Mephibosheth to Jerusalem? This would have availed nothing for Mephibosheth could not walk—he could not come of himself. Did David send

a pair of crutches and tell him to hobble the best he could to Jerusalem? No indeed. We read, "Then the king sent and fetched him." He brought him to his house and treated him as a member of his family and had him eat at the king's table. And all this illustrates the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in bringing a sinner to Christ and into the family of God.



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