

9. God's mercy personified

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A. MORE CONQUESTS OF DAVID

2 Samuel 8:1-8 After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines. 2 Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David's servants, and brought tribute. 3 David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates. 4 David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horse-men, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots. 5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians. 6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought tribute. The Lord preserved David wherever he went. 7 And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 Also from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.

The Philistines had troubled Israel for centuries, and often dominated Israel. Under the reign of David, he both attacked and subdued these troublesome enemies. What is happening in the Gaza Street now is nothing new, because the Jews and Philistines have been at each other's throat for last 3000 years.

2 Samuel 8:9-18 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, 10 then Toi sent Joram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and Joram brought with him articles of silver, articles of gold, and articles of bronze. 11 King David also dedicated these to the Lord, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued-- 12 from Syria, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13 And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt. 14 He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David wherever he went. 15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. 16 Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17 Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah was the scribe; 18 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.

B. ONE OF SCRIPTURE'S RICHEST ILLUSTRATIONS OF GRACE

Let's say we have here a big white wall. Somewhere in the middle of that white wall, there is a red spot. Guess which one we concentrate on or remember about that big white wall? The white wall or red spot? Of course, the red spot. That is what we think about king David. Even though God Himself declares that he is the man after God's own heart, most of us remember him as an adulterer and murder.

In 2 Samuel 7, David asked, “What can I do for God?” and he proposed to build a temple for the Lord. Now David asks another question we should each ask: “What can I do for others?”

In 2 Samuel 9, we come to one of Scripture’s richest illustrations of grace. Patterning his heart after God’s by extending acceptance and mercy, David showers a shriveled soul with a refreshing rain of grace.

Before we go any further, let’s touch up our memory regarding the definition for “Grace”, “Mercy” and “Judgement”.

Grace: Getting what you don’t deserve. It is God’s unmerited favor

Mercy: Not getting what you deserve.

Judgment: Getting what you do deserve.

C. A PROMISE IS A PROMISE

The story begins earlier with two promises David made one to his dearest friend and the other to his bitterest enemy.

The first promise was between David and Jonathan. Anticipating the day when David would become king, Jonathan had asked his friend in secret.

1 Samuel 20:14-15 And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.

In those days, an incoming king would hunt down and kill the deposed monarch’s family to eliminate the possibility of retaliation or battle for the throne. David, however, vowed that he would spare Jonathan and his family, showing them God’s kindness.

The word ‘kindness’ in Hebrew is ‘chesed’, which can be translated ‘grace.’ Kindness is one of the essences of grace. Specifically, it is the demonstration of love toward those who don’t deserve it and who can’t repay.

David well understood the concept of grace. As an unknown shepherd boy, he had felt the oil of God’s favor trickling down his face when Samuel anointed him. Ever since, God’s grace had flowed through his life in an unending stream of protection and strength.

The second promise was between David and Saul. Saul also knew in his heart that David would be king someday, and he pleaded with him in 1 Samuel 24:21.

1 Samuel 24:21 Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s house.

In light of Saul’s persecutions, David could have rightfully denied his request, but he graciously pledged to honor it instead.

Much had happened since David made those vows. After years of waiting, David had ascended the throne of Israel and reached his zenith of power. The bright lights of success, however, didn’t obscure his character. He was still a man of his word, and he wouldn’t forget his promises.

D. AN EXAMPLE OF GRACE

2 Samuel 9:1 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?"

"Kindness" – there's the Hebrew word again, 'chesed'. His heart overflowing with grace, David asks for anyone – not just those who are worthy or qualified but anyone. His kindness is unconditional and free.

2 Samuel 9:2-3 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?" And 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."

Ziba offered the information about this man king David didn't even ask for. He raised Jonathan's son's handicap as a red flag. He tells the king nothing about the man, not even his name - only that he is "crippled." Yet where Ziba sees a problem, David sees a person. And where Ziba sees a deficiency, David sees an opportunity for grace.

Ziba's true color regarding Mephibosheth showed up when David was fleeing from his son Absalom in chapter 16. Ziba lied to David that Mephibosheth was siding with Absalom. It was his way to dump the old master, so that he may be in his own.

The kindness of God is key to understanding David's motivation in this chapter. David wanted to show someone else the same kindness God showed to him. Let's remember that he didn't say 'the kindness of David'. He has the right perspective of extending mercy and grace of God as we receive from Him.

2 Samuel 9:4-5 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.

Lo Debar means "no pasture." It refers to a wasteland. Incapable of supporting himself and stripped of his inheritance, Jonathan's son lives as an outcast in a barren place, far from the lush royal estates that might have been his as Saul's grandson.

The last thing the former king's grandson, Mephibosheth wants to hear is a group of messengers from king David knocking at his door. He doesn't know why he's been summoned, but he must assume it is for execution. Trembling, he hobbles into the king's chamber.

Mephibosheth doesn't even have his own house. Instead, he lives in the house of another man, Machir the son of Ammiel. Machir later showed he was intensely loyal to David. When David's son Absalom led a rebellion against David, Machir supported and helped David at great danger to himself in chapter 17.

2 Samuel 9:6 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!"

We finally discover the man's name: Mephibosheth. It means "one who scatters shame." He hadn't chosen his name, nor had he chosen his life which took a tragic turn the day his father and grandfather were killed. 2 Samuel 4:4 recounts the sad events that marked his life forever.

2 Samuel 4:4 Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame 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 it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

Ever since, Mephibosheth has borne the painful, disfiguring reminder of that awful day. And now, as he lies prostrate before David, he must fully expect to hear the whoosh of a sword on his neck and to die as he has lived, in shame.

E. THE RESULT OF GRACE

2 Samuel 9:7-8 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?"

The words that reach Mephibosheth's ears, however, are not ones of judgment but of mercy. Mephibosheth's parched soul can hardly absorb the grace that David is showing on him.

What has Mephibosheth done to merit such kindness? Nothing. Had he deserved it, it wouldn't be grace. Grace is acceptance without reservation, forgiveness without condemnation, pardon without probation. It is unrestrained love poured out on the undeserving. That is exactly what God has done for us through Jesus Christ our Lord. While we didn't deserve His love, He poured out his love upon us. While we were sinners, He extended His mercy upon us. While we were His enemy by our wicked nature, He draped us with His grace.

And David isn't done pouring out his grace to this man!

2 Samuel 9:9-13 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 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.

The story ends here with a wonderful picture of Mephibosheth dining at the king's table, just like one of the King's own children. How sweet the taste of grace and nobody knew the flavor better than Mephibosheth!

Psalms 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

F. THE NINE ANALOGIES

We can find nine analogies connect David's grace to Mephibosheth with God's grace to us:

1. Once Mephibosheth had enjoyed fellowship with his father. So Adam had enjoyed intimate relationship with God in the Garden of Eden.

2. When disaster struck, fear came, and Mephibosheth suffered a fall that crippled him for the rest of his life.

When sin came, humanity suffered a fall, which has forever left us spiritually crippled.

3. Out of unconditional love for his friend Jonathan, David sought anyone to whom he might extend his grace.

God, because of His unconditional love for His Son and acceptance of His Son's death on the cross, continues to seek anyone to whom He might extend His grace.

4. The crippled man was destitute and undeserving. All he could do was accept the king's favor.

We sinners are undeserving God's mercy and without hope. In no way are we worthy of our King's favor. All we can do is humbly and gratefully accept it.

5. The king took the crippled Mephibosheth from a barren wasted land and seated him at the royal banquet table in the palace.

God, our Father, has rescued us from a moral wasteland and seated us in a place of spiritual nourishment and intimacy.

6. David adopted Mephibosheth into his royal family, providing him with every blessing within the palace.

We also have been adopted into a family – God's family. And He gives us full privileges within His household.

7. Mephibosheth's limp was a constant reminder of David's grace.

Our moral feebleness keeps us from ever forgetting that where sin abounds, grace abounds that much more.

8. David said nothing about Mephibosheth's lame feet.

God forgets our sin because it is blotted out by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only way God can forgive our sins.

9. When Mephibosheth sat at the king's table he was treated with the same respect as David's own sons. The king's tablecloth covered his lame feet.

When we one day attend the great wedding feast of the Lamb, the same will be true for us. We will sit with prophets and priests, apostles and evangelists, pastors and missionaries. We will dine with everyone from the apostle Peter to Billy Graham. And we will be there with them because that same tablecloth of grace covers all our feet.