

## (2-4-24) Rebellion Meets Mercy

### 2 Samuel 9:1-13.

I want to thank those of you that joined with us on our 21 days fast. I hope that you continue to grow closer to the Lord over the rest of 2024.

How many weeks until Easter? (8 weeks)

This Sunday, I'd like to share God's restorative plan through the life of a little-known person in Old Testament named Mephibosheth. What we'll see is that his story represents what God has done for us, and how God seeks us out to bring us to His table.

It is found **2 Samuel 9**, which happened after David was firmly established as King. It was then that he remembered a promise that he made to his best friend, Jonathan, that he would show kindness to his family. Now that Jonathan was dead along with his father, King Saul, David searched for and found the only surviving member of Jonathan's family, Mephibosheth. After David found him, he restored him to his palace, the King's Palace.

### Read 2 Samuel 9:1-13.

As we look at the restoration of Mephibosheth, we'll see is that his story represents what God has done for each of us. First, like Mephibosheth....

#### 1. Crippled by a fall.

- **Read verse 3** again.
- The story of what happened is found in **2 Samuel 4**. Let me give you a little background. Israel went out to war with the Philistines, and in the battle both Jonathan and Saul were killed.

**“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.” (2 Samuel 4:4)**

- News of the defeat and of Jonathan's and Saul's deaths reached the palace, and everyone panicked and started running. They knew they were dead, either by the hands of the Philistines if they came to claim their prize, or possibly through David, because when a new king takes over, they usually kill the royal family so there is no conflict later. Neither of which occurred.
- So, Mephibosheth started out at a distinct disadvantage in life. His well-meaning nurse panicked when she heard about the death of both Saul and Jonathan, and in her haste to get the boy away from danger she dropped him. Because of that fall, Mephibosheth grew up crippled in both feet. For the rest of his days, Mephibosheth would need the help of others to get by. He was pretty much at the mercy of anyone who wanted to do him harm.
- Because there was such haste to escape, Mephibosheth bones weren't properly cared for and so they healed wrong. And since in those days the feet included the ankles, it was a good possibility that he was so crippled that he couldn't even walk.
- So, how does all this relate to us?

- Well first, like Mephibosheth, we were all crippled by the fall. Humanity was crippled because of the fall of Adam and thus at a disadvantage, and the reason is because we are all now born with the propensity to sin.
- Morally speaking we cannot live up to the perfect standards of God.
- Physically speaking we all face pain and sickness and death, and the Apostle Paul said it like this,

**“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)**

- We all fall short of God’s holy and righteous standards for living. So, we all have the same basic problem Mephibosheth had. We are crippled when it comes to pleasing God based upon our own deeds. Like Mephibosheth, we were all crippled by the fall.

But the good news is that, like Mephibosheth.....

## **2. Sought by the King.**

- David made a covenant with Jonathan, that is, a binding agreement. But even more than that, it was a promise between friends that David would always be kind and look out for Jonathan’s family and descendants.

Jonathan said to David, **“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.” (1 Samuel 20:15)**

- After the civil war was over, a war between the house of David and the house of Saul, which during this time was ruled by Saul’s son Ishbosheth, David remembered that he had made this covenant of friendship with Jonathan and his family. So, he searched for members of Jonathan’s family to bless and make good on his promise.

**“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?’” (2 Samuel 9:1)**

- Mephibosheth did not search for King David; rather it was King David who searched for him. King David went out of his way to seek out this lost son of Jonathan. In very much the same way, Jesus came into the world seeking those who were not seeking him.

**Jesus said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)**

- Generally, people do not seek after God, mainly because they don’t know who He is, or how He can be found. They may know that there is a God, but they don’t really know Him. And here’s the point, God’s not lost, we are!
- Too many people are unconscious to the fact they have sinned against God. They have no idea they are lost and separated from Him. And they don’t know that the first step in being restored is realizing they are lost sinners who desperately need to be found and saved by the King.
- At least Mephibosheth knew he was officially an enemy of the King. He knew there was nothing he could do to make things right. Unless the King came and sought him out for good, he was doomed to hide the rest of his life, otherwise being found would mean his death.
- And so, like Mephibosheth we are sought out by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we’ve been found, but not in a palace, but in a desolate place, far away from the King.

Just like Mephibosheth.....

### **3. Found in desolation.**

**“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.’” (2 Samuel 9:4)**

- Mephibosheth, at this point in his life was a fugitive, living in fear, dreading the day when he would be found and put to death. So, in fear of what might happen he chose a place where no one would look.
- Lo Debar was a town east of the Jordan River. The whole area was more of a barren wasteland. The literal meaning of Lo Debar is “the place of no bread, no pasture.” Mephibosheth was hiding out in a desolate place.
- This is the condition of humanity, that is, to stay away from God, to steer clear and to maintain our distance. The reason is because we know our lives are not what or where they should be, so in fear we keep our distance from a holy and righteous God.
- Like Mephibosheth humanity has moved outside of God promises, which describes Lo Debar to a tee, being across the Jordan River and thus outside of the Promised Land. Humanity is hiding in a desolate place, separated from God because of sin.
- But to that desolate place comes Jesus Christ Who is the bread of life. He came into our desolate place so that we could have nourishment and life.
- And so, the Bread of Life, that is, Jesus, comes to humanity’s aid, to Lo Debar, the place of no bread, so that we can have eternal life with Him.
- Remember the parable of the lost sheep. The Good Shepherd left the 99 healthy sheep back in the safety of the sheepfold while he scoured the countryside looking for the one lost lamb.
- That’s God grace for lost sinners. And that’s how David looked for Mephibosheth.
- And so, Jesus is calling us out of Lo Debar, the land of exile, the land of shame and bondage and into His kingdom.
- All of humanity is under the condemnation of sin, living in the land of bondage, and not fully comprehending that they are just a prayer away from God’s forgiveness and restoration.

Further, like Mephibosheth.....

### **4. Saved for another’s sake.**

**“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.’” (2 Samuel 9:7)**

- David loved Mephibosheth from the very beginning, but not for Mephibosheth’s sake, nor was it for anything that he had done; rather it was for his father, Jonathan’s sake. David’s love, and his promise to Jonathan, extended to Jonathan’s descendants.
- In much the same way, God loves every one of us for His Son’s sake. We don’t have to earn His love; rather we already have His love. The Father’s love was freely given through His son, Jesus.
- I love what Paul tells us in **Ephesians 1:6**, that God has accepted us through His Beloved Son, Jesus. We are fully acceptable to God and are now a part of His family through the love Jesus showed when He died upon the cross for us.

to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He [a]made us accepted in the Beloved. Eph. 1:6

Just like Mephibosheth....

#### 5. Restored to the King's table.

**“As for Mephibosheth,’ said the king, ‘he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons’ ... So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet.” (2 Samuel 9:11b, 13)**

- Mephibosheth had no legal right to sit at the king's table! He had no legal right to come into the presence of the king! But it was grace that placed him there!
- And it is with even greater grace that God reached out to all of us, even in our desolation, even in our sins, even while we were His enemies, and showed us kindness through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. THIS IS LOVE!

**“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)**

- God sent His Son to this earth, to this place of spiritual and physical desolation to gather us to His heavenly kingdom, to His Throne room, and to His table in heaven forever. How great is His love, and how great is His grace?
- But let me go back to the ending of this story, that while he remained at David's table, he was still crippled. He was never healed physically. God sometimes allows us to be or remain crippled to remind us of His love, mercy, and grace.

#### Conclusion

Before we end our time together, there is still more to this story concerning Mephibosheth. It is found later in **2 Samuel 19**.

After David escaped Jerusalem because of his son, Absalom's rebellion, Mephibosheth couldn't join David because he was crippled. And yet while he remained in Jerusalem, he dressed and lived in such a way to share the sorrow and suffering that his lord, David, was suffering.

**“Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace.” (2 Samuel 19:24 NKJV)**

Our King, Jesus, is coming again, and we wait in expectation of His return. But how are we to wait. Like Mephibosheth we are to live our lives here on earth in such a way to identify with Him. But how?

**Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23)**

To deny oneself means that we are to put aside all selfish ambition and desires.

As we think about Mephibosheth's story, let's think of it this way, before we could do anything about it, the devil grabbed humanity, and we fell, becoming permanently crippled. We then went and hid ourselves from God in a desolate and barren land of sin.

But God sent His Son, Jesus, who has gone out of His way to seek us out. And our King has found us in a far country. And like David, He wants to adopt us into His family so we can sit at His table forever.

And so, the story of Mephibosheth is a reminder of how God actively seeks those who are lost and brings them home to His table. But while we are still on this side of eternity, let's live our lives in such a way to show the world of our love for Him, living for Him, and carrying our crosses daily.

The way (path) to God is not found through religion.

The way (path) to God is not found through righteousness.

The way (path) to God is found through a relationship to Jesus.

**Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. -John 14:6**