

(2 Samuel) the Kindness of God

by David Guzik

David's kindness to Mephibosheth illustrates the profound grace and forgiveness of God towards us, despite our fears and shortcomings.

Duration: 33:57

Scripture: 2 Samuel 9:1, 2 Samuel 9:9-11, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 1:14

Topics: "God's Kindness", "Righteousness Before God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that comparing ourselves to others does not determine our righteousness before God. Instead, we are judged by God's holy standard, such as the Ten Commandments. The speaker highlights the commandment of not bearing false witness, stating that even telling a single lie makes us guilty before God. The sermon then shifts to the story of Mephibosheth, a descendant of Saul who is lame in his feet. Despite his fear and feelings of worthlessness, King David shows him kindness and love, demonstrating the forgiveness and grace of God.

Transcript

Let's jump right in the text together here this morning, 2 Samuel, chapter 9, verse 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? As we come to 2 Samuel 9, David is in the full flower of his success and greatness as king. He's defeated a lot of enemies. All the neighboring nations around Israel are either conquered or put under tribute by Israel under David.

The Philistines are taking care of the Moabites, the Edomites, the Syrians. It's really David's great time of triumph. It's before the troublesome incident with Bathsheba and following after that.

We'll come to that in a few weeks. Here we really see David at the height of his royal glory. Now, in those days, it was customary that when one dynasty replaced another.

That the new dynasty would find everybody who is connected with the old dynasty and kill them. There would be a wholesale massacre of everybody belonging to the prior dynasty. This is because if you left anybody alive that had a claim to the throne under the previous dynasty, they might come back to haunt you or kill you or raise an uprising or something.

So we're not surprised to find David asking the question in verse one. Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul? Every king asked that question. Is there anybody around from the previous dynasty? I want to know.

Kings had a habit of asking that question because they finished the question like this. Is there any is there still anyone who is left at the house of Saul that I may kill them? That's not how David asked the question, though. Look at what he said in verse one, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake.

It's remarkable. David is recalling his great relationship with this wonderful man of God named Jonathan, who was the son of the prior king Saul and who himself was the crown prince in line for the throne. But Jonathan was of such a sensitive spiritual nature that he understood that it was really David who should be the next king.

And one dramatic incident in first Samuel, Jonathan and David are together and Jonathan takes off his royal robe and his armor and he gives it to David. It's his way of saying, I know that you're supposed to be the next king. And even though everybody expects me to be it, it's going to be you.

And I will support you in that. When they had that transaction, Jonathan asked David to make a covenant. He said, David, when you come to the throne, please don't do as is the custom in our time and place.

Be kind to my descendants. Now David's remembering those promises. You know, a lot of times when people come into the flowering of their success, they forget all the promises to the people in the past and the little people, so to speak, especially a man who's already dead.

What right did David have to respect the promise made to a dead man? But David was a man of such principle and honor that he says, oh, I remember that covenant I made with Jonathan. Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? So what do you do? Well, you look around, you do a search, you hire a private detective or something, and they go out and look around if there's anyone left of the house of Saul. Now, here's the point.

If there was anyone left of the house of Saul, they were in hiding. Because they knew that if they were exposed, they might very well be killed. So David has to do some investigation.

Look at it here in verse two. 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.

Then the king said, is there not still someone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God? I want you to pause right there at the end of verse three or the middle of verse three, where it says David wanted to show any descendants of the house of Saul the kindness of God. This is remarkable because Saul was David's enemy. Saul was a man determined to ruin David, to defame him, to destroy him in any way that he could.

David is such a man of honor and love that he wants to bestow kindness upon any living descendants of the house of Saul. Did you see where this kindness came from? It's in the middle of verse three, right where we stopped. It's the kindness of God.

That's the great thing about the kindness of God is that it doesn't only belong to God. He gives it to us so that we can give it to other people. Last night, Ingelil and I sat together across the table from some dear old friends that we hadn't seen for many years.

And these dear friends of ours are having trouble in their marriage. And we spoke to them and it was a nice time together, but our hearts went out for him. And Ingelil and I sense the same thing in speaking to him.

One of the things that they needed so much in their marriage was just to forgive each other. And as I was thinking about this, this phrase from 2 Samuel 9 flashed in my mind, where David said that he wanted to show unto any descendants of the house of Saul the kindness of God. You see, because there's the kindness of man and then there's the kindness of God.

The kindness of man isn't bad. It's better to have the kindness of man rather than the cruelty of man. Let's understand something.

The kindness of man isn't anything close to the kindness of God. And there's the forgiveness of man and the forgiveness of God. And the forgiveness of man is better than the resentment or the bitterness of the revenge of man.

But it's nothing like the forgiveness of God. Think about how we forgive on a human level. On a human level, I'll forgive you if you promise to never do it again.

And if I knew that you would do it again, I would never forgive you. Maybe we should ask for a show of hands at how many people are glad that God doesn't forgive that way. Because if we were forgiven that way from God, there's not a single person here who would ever be forgiven.

In human forgiveness, we'll forgive somebody if they are really, really sorry and say all the right things. And you know what? They have to initiate it, don't they? They have to initiate it. That's human forgiveness.

Divine forgiveness is so much greater than that, isn't it? Divine forgiveness says, I'll initiate it. Human forgiveness will say, I'll forgive you if you take the blame and pay the penalty because you deserve it. Divine forgiveness, God's forgiveness.

It says, I'll forgive you and I will take all the penalty of that crime upon myself. I will bear the guilt. I will bear the shame and the penalty.

Isn't that what Jesus did for us on the cross? You see, there's a difference between the forgiveness of man and the forgiveness of God. As Ingelil and I spoke with this couple, our hearts were just in agreement. They needed the forgiveness of God.

I mean, the forgiveness of man had done about all it could do in their marriage. But it wasn't enough. And maybe that's where your stumbling point is in your marriage or in that relationship.

You know, you've tried the best you could with the kindness of man. Now it's time to break out the kindness of God. You've tried the best you could with the forgiveness of man.

It can only go so far. Oh, but the forgiveness of God, the kind of forgiveness He gave you, you can give it to someone else. Verse three continues on.

And Ziba said to the king, there's still a son of Jonathan who's lame in his feet. So the king said to him, where is he? And Ziba said to the king, indeed, he's in the house of Mahir, the son of Amiel, in Lo-Devar. We learn a few things about this descendant of Saul.

First of all, Ziba is hesitant to name him. Maybe Ziba thinks that David just wants to find out who he is and where he is so he can kill him. And he's just telling Ziba that he'll be kind to him.

The second thing we learn is that he's lame in his feet. Ziba said this for two reasons. First of all, it was true.

Second of all, perhaps he hoped it would elicit some sympathy in David. David, this man is no threat to you. He's lame.

He's a cripple in some way or another. Matter of fact, 2 Samuel chapter 4 tells us how this man, yet unnamed, later on we learn that his name is Mephibosheth. I messed that name up several times during the first message this morning.

We'll see how many times I can make it through this morning saying it properly. Tells us how Mephibosheth came to be lame. When he was five years old, the news came to him in the city of Jezreel, came to his household, that his grandfather, King Saul, and his father, the crown prince Jonathan, and two of his uncles and multitudes of the army of Israel were killed in battle at the hands of the Philistines.

Now, those in Mephibosheth's household knew what that meant. It meant that likely a massacre was on the way to hurriedly kill all the descendants of Saul. And so in a panic, Mephibosheth's nurse, his babysitter, his nanny, picked him up and started running to flee the scene.

And somehow she tripped, they fell, and he sustained an injury to his feet or his legs or whatever that left him lame the rest of his life. Tragic thought, isn't it? Here's a crippled man hiding from King David, living in fear that David will discover him. And he's also poor.

You say, how do you know he's poor? At the end of verse five, it says he's living in the house of Mechir, the son of Ammiel. It's not even his own house. He's living with somebody else, crippled, fearful, hiding and poor.

That's Mephibosheth. Might I say as well that that's us before our king sought us out. Oh, we're crippled.

I'm not crippled. I think religion is great for people who need a crutch. Folks, you don't need a crutch.

You need a whole hospital. Now, I know we make ourselves feel good, usually by comparing ourselves with other people. And you can make yourself feel pretty good.

You probably know plenty of people who are worse than you. You know, good for you. Hip hip hurray.

God's not going to judge you on the curve. The Bible says that we have to answer to God's holy standard. We'll just go before the Ten Commandments.

Just go before you know what's right and wrong before God. I could go through all ten of them and we could have quite a time this morning seeing how we're guilty before the Ten Commandments. Let's just consider one of them.

One of the commandments is you shall not bear false witness. That means you shall not lie. You ever told a lie? You're guilty.

That's it. We're crippled before God. We're not just crippled.

We hide from him also. Oh, I know that before we come to Christ, we may think that sometimes we seek God. And in some ways, we may.

But by and large, we hide from God. That's how it was in my life for a time. Was it like that for you, too? Where you almost said to God, OK, you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone.

You know, we just it's like you live your life. God now live my life. We hide from God.

Oh, and the fears in our life, the unspoken fears, the fears that are behind the smiles and the grins and everything's fine. And then poverty, we're poor, too. Now, your bank account may not tell you that you're poor.

It may say you're poor, but it may not. But we're poor in soul before we come to Jesus Christ. We're like Mephibosheth.

Well, what's David going to do with this man? Take a look at verse five. Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Mechir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-Debar. Can you imagine how that was? There's Mephibosheth and a knock comes to the door.

The door opens and it's not Mephibosheth answering the door. Number one, it's not his house. Number two, he's lame.

He's not the one who jumps up to answer the door. But it's, you know, the master of the house or servant in the house. Mephibosheth perhaps can hear what's going on at the front door.

And instantly he hears that there's a detachment of the king's emissaries there at the door. And they're looking for a fellow named Mephibosheth. Does he live here? And what's Mephibosheth thinking? He swallows hard.

He goes, I've been afraid of this day my whole life. Ever since I was five years old, I knew that one day the new king would come looking for all the relatives of the old king and he'd want to kill them all. This is it.

I've had a pretty good run up until now, but this is it. All my fears have come upon me now. And so the soldiers, you know, if I was writing the screenplay for this, I would make it to where the soldiers didn't tell Mephibosheth what was going on.

They would just say, the king needs to see you right away. They'd cart him off to Jerusalem and it'd be the longest journey of Mephibosheth's life. Just thinking, oh great, I'm going to come before the king and he's going to kill me.

So what does Mephibosheth do? Look at it there in verse six. 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.

He gets the undertow there, don't you? Please don't kill me. I know that this is how all you kings do it. It's almost what I should expect from you, David.

It's just how things are done. But please don't kill me. If you can find it anywhere in your heart, don't kill me.

You know, it's funny about the way that Mephibosheth avoided David and was afraid of him. It was all based on assumption, not on fact. The truth about David was David loved Mephibosheth even before Mephibosheth loved David.

David cared about him and wanted him blessed and restored before Mephibosheth even had any kind of relationship with him. All the hiding, all the fear, all the distance from this King David. It was all a figment of Mephibosheth's imagination.

But it was real because that's what he thought David would do to him. So look at what David does in verse seven. So David said to him, do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan, your father's sake.

And we'll restore to you all the land of Saul, your grandfather. And you shall eat bread at my table continually. How about that? But think about how it could have gone.

David could have just said, Mephibosheth, I want you to know. I have nothing against you. I won't kill you.

Go your way. Would Mephibosheth have left that day pretty happy? You bet he would have. I mean, I'm free, he'd say.

I can go back to my home. I can live. I don't have to live in this bondage of fear and, you know, worry that I'm going to be killed.

Great. But David did so much more than that. He said, Mephibosheth, don't fear.

Notice that in verse seven, I'll show you kindness for Jonathan, your father's sake. Not because you're so great. Mephibosheth, I don't even know you, but I knew your father and any son of that father.

I want to bless. I want to honor. And so he said, I'll restore to you all the land of Saul, your grandfather.

Now, this was land that rightfully belonged to Mephibosheth, but, you know, they couldn't find any of the descendants of Saul. They thought they were all gone. David had to scratch his head and wonder, where are these people? And these people never came forward to claim the land.

So they just reverted back to the crown to David himself. They were David's to give. But by right, they were the inheritance of Mephibosheth.

But he had lost them. So now David says, I'll give it all back to you. You're going to get back what you lost.

But more than that, was he say at the end of verse seven, you shall eat bread at my table continually. I wouldn't be surprised if Mephibosheth said what? No, it's one thing that you spare my life. It's another thing that you give me back what was lost.

But to eat bread at your table, not just once, but continually. No, I must be hearing things, David. This is a joke.

You're doing this just to, you know, butter me up before you cut my head off. No, you come in, you. You have a close relationship with the king.

Eat at my table every night. So what do you do today? Mephibosheth gets to ask David at the end of the day. Well, you know, I was working with the administration.

You know, the treasurer has given me such a problem. Or, you know, the civil service. Oh, it's a headache.

I wish somebody would just fix this for me. David wants to know, well, Mephibosheth, what did you do today? And they talk about it over the dinner table. Man, that's great.

Look at Mephibosheth's response in verse eight. And then he bowed himself and said, what is your servant that you should look upon such a dead dog as I? Now, we would owe this to just exaggeration. If we didn't think of where Mephibosheth had been.

You can't live for years and years in fear, in hiding, in poverty and crippled without being pretty thoroughly convinced that you're worthless. That's how Mephibosheth thought of himself. That's how we think of ourselves.

When we're in that place. Of hiding and fear and poverty and we're lame. You just learn pretty early that you're worthless.

You have as much value as one of those dead dogs that you see in the street. Which means nothing. All those years had made Mephibosheth feel that way.

David doesn't want to just dump a bunch of stuff on him. David wants to remove that sense from him. Mephibosheth, you're not worthless.

You're my friend. And that's enough to make you wonderful. A person of worth before me.

So David puts the crowning touch on it here in verse nine. It's almost as if as we get to verse nine that I think David feels like I've got to persuade him. I've got to convince him.

And instead of just sort of talking him into it. Oh, come on now Mephibosheth. Don't think like that.

You know, sometimes words like that sound so hollow. So, so empty when you're feeling so worthless and empty. David took an entirely different tact in verse nine.

He said, I'm going to prove it to this man that I care about him, that I love him. I'm going to do something right now. Verse nine.

And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, I've given to your master's son all that belong to him and to Saul and all his house. You, therefore, and your sons and your servants shall work the land for him and 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 15 sons and 20 servants. 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. Mephibosheth had a young son. His name was Micah.

And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. In other words, David said to prove it to you, Mephibosheth, see this man Ziba and all of his sons and servants. They belong to you now.

I just gave you a bunch of land. Who's going to work the land? Ziba and his sons and servants, they're your workers now. But you know what? They don't have to work that land to provide food for you, Mephibosheth.

That'll be for the rest of your family. No, they're going to work that land to provide food for the family and all that. You're going to eat at my table like a son.

I think that persuaded Mephibosheth that this was for real. Not only did he give me my life, he gave me back what I lost. He gave me the privilege of eating at his table and then he gives me his servants.

That's a pretty good deal. Mephibosheth would say. So look at the end verse of the chapter.

It says, so Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet. Three things from this last verse.

First of all, Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem. No longer did he hide in fear of the king. Now he lived openly among the people of God.

I'm Mephibosheth, I eat at the king's table. Nice to meet you. That's where Mephibosheth lived.

Look at the second thing in verse 13. He ate continually at the king's table. No longer in poverty.

No longer separated from the king. Now he had great privilege before the king. I would have loved to be a fly on the wall at some of those dinners.

To see Mephibosheth. Can you imagine the first one? He'd be in there. I feel like that sometimes, you know, in a fancy place.

Sometimes I'll feel like, man, I don't belong here. They're going to ask me to leave pretty soon. They're going to.

Hey, you out, you know, that kind of thing. I bet Mephibosheth felt like that. But then he realized, no, I'm here and I, I belong here because the king says I do.

And that's good enough. Then the third thing in verse 13, it ends with saying he was lame in both his feet still. I want you to see that Mephibosheth's weaknesses did not vanish.

I mean, he was still far better. But he was still lame. But how do you think he thought of himself when he woke up in the morning? Do you think he said to himself, cripple, fearful, poor? I don't think so.

That I'm Mephibosheth and I, I eat at the table of a great king. Now, folks, the point is pretty clear and I've been alluding to it somewhat throughout the whole message. But let me, let me conclude with two identifications.

First of all, you are Mephibosheth. That's you. You were hiding poor, weak, lame and fearful before your king came to you.

You were separated from your king because of your wicked ancestors. Why was Mephibosheth separated from King David? Was it because of something Mephibosheth did? Not primarily. It was because of who Saul was.

You know why you were separated from your king? Because of what old Adam did. And we inherited that. But Mephibosheth was also separated from David because of his deliberate actions.

Every day he chose to live in hiding. And we were the same way. We were also separated from our king, not only because of our ancestors, but because of our actions as well.

You are like Mephibosheth because you separated yourself from your king and you didn't really know his love and his care for you. If only Mephibosheth would have known what would have happened if he would have come 10 years before this and said, David, I am Mephibosheth. I am the son of Jonathan, son of Saul.

He would have received this 10 years before, because David's heart was always inclined this way towards Mephibosheth. He just didn't know it. You are like Mephibosheth because your king sought you before you ever sought him.

The story does not begin with Mephibosheth saying, well, I wonder what King David's doing. Not at all. It was David who sought Mephibosheth.

You are like Mephibosheth because the kindness of your king is extended to you for the sake of another person. Whose sake was it for with Mephibosheth? It was Jonathan's sake. Whose sake is it for because of you? It's for the sake of your Savior, Jesus Christ.

It's as if God the Father looks down from heaven and he says, to whom may I show kindness for the sake of my son, Jesus? It's not because you're so wonderful. I hate to burst that bubble. Remember you? Lame, weak, poor, in hiding.

But you have a wonderful Jesus. You are like Mephibosheth in that your king's kindness towards you is based on covenant. Not on emotion, not on whim, on covenant.

You are like Mephibosheth in that you must receive the king's kindness with humility. Mephibosheth didn't say, well, it's about time, David. No, he received it with great humility.

You are like Mephibosheth in that the king restores to you what was lost. That's what God wants to do. All that we lost in the fall.

All the fellowship with God. All the strength and vitality of life God wants to restore to us in Jesus Christ. But you are Mephibosheth as well in that the king returns more to you than you ever lost.

Friends, I could speak for hours on this topic because it's a topic that greatly blesses and greatly interests me. But let me suffice it to say in one sentence that we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. That's the glory of our redemption.

You are Mephibosheth in that you have the privilege of provision at the king's table. That's what he gives to you. Come and dine with me.

Come and sup with me. And he receives you there as a son, as a daughter. If I could extend it out one more way, I would say that you are Mephibosheth as well, because the king even gives you his servants.

What does the Bible say? It says that angels are ministering servants that God sends forth on behalf of those who will inherit salvation. God says angels are my servants, but I'll share them with my redeemed.

You have no idea all the trouble that some angel rescued you from this week.

You think it was a bad week? Oh, you don't know what you were spared from because God shared his servants with you. Can you grab a hold of that this morning? You are Mephibosheth. Now, some of you are Mephibosheth after the fact, after you've been received into the king's household.

If that's you, wonderful. But let me say this. Are you showing up for dinner at the king's table? How weird it would be for Mephibosheth to have this great honor of eating at the king's table? And David, well, where's Mephibosheth tonight? Well, I don't know.

He's over at McDonald's. You know, not the king's table for him tonight. You know, he's getting the Big Mac combo and he's supersizing it.

David would have every reason to not only question the sanity, but the heart of Mephibosheth at that moment. He can come and eat at the king's table. And what is he filling himself with? Friends, this is heavy when we think of what God has given us in Jesus Christ.

And then we think of our neglect of it. It's convicting. Look at what he's given.

You come, you eat at my table. Open door for fellowship with me anytime. When's the last time you availed yourself of it? When's the last time you stirred yourself to lay hold of God? So if you are Mephibosheth, after coming to the palace, live like it.

But maybe there's some here this morning and you're Mephibosheth and you're still hiding. You're still filled with fear. You're still poor.

Oh, today is the day. Today is the day for you to humble yourself before your king and say, I know that you have loved me with this great love for Jesus' sake. I will humble myself before you and receive what you have to give me.

That's salvation. Recognize that you're just as poor and needy as Mephibosheth and you need a great Savior. And that's what he'll do.

He will greatly save you. But I need to conclude with one last thought. Not only are you Mephibosheth, but isn't there a sense, too, in which you should be David? Isn't there an enemy that God wants you to show kindness to and to bless for Jesus' sake? I think there is.

Probably somebody in your life that God wants you to pray for or to love or to bless. Shouldn't you and I look for the poor and the weak and the lame and the hidden and look to bless them? Just like David did. Shouldn't we bless others when they don't deserve it and bless them more than they deserve? If you're just giving to people what they deserve, what credit is that to you? Shouldn't you and I look to show someone else the kindness of God? Not merely the kindness of man or the love of God, not just the love of man, the forgiveness of God, not just the forgiveness of man.

God's given us a great picture here. We are at once both Mephibosheth and David. Let's pray and ask the Lord to help us walk that walk and not just hear it, but do it.

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