

A Seat at the Table

2 Samuel 9

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April 21, 2024

2 Samuel 9- Then David said, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul, so that I could show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2 Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they summoned him to David; and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." 3 Then the king said, "Is there no one remaining of the house of Saul to whom I could show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan, one who is disabled 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 messengers who 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 Then David said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will assuredly show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you yourself shall eat at my table regularly." 8 Again he prostrated himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should be concerned about a dead dog like me?"

⁹ Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, "Everything 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 will have food to eat; nevertheless Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, shall eat at my table regularly." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "In accordance with everything 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. ¹² Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. ¹³ So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he ate at the king's table regularly. And he was disabled in his two feet.

Have you ever been reading the Scriptures and been struck by what you read? Maybe what you read was so profound because in that moment what you were reading was so applicable to a thought, feeling, or situation you were going through right then. Maybe it was the moment you first truly believed; a moment when you were seriously questioning Almighty God and His Word; a moment when a passage you had read before – perhaps many times – took on a whole new meaning for you. It was that last scenario for me when I came across this passage again a decade ago.

- Out of nowhere I was reading through 2 Samuel and I finished chapter 9 and I had to stop, put my Bible down, smile and chuckle because of what our gracious, kind and loving Heavenly Father was reminding me of in that moment. The truth is simple in that it is easy for God to do; but at the same time it's impossible for you or me to achieve or earn by ourselves. God does this out of the abundance of His love for us, a people who often quickly and sometimes egregiously run from Him, perhaps denying Him, and questioning Who He is and what He has promised.
- What is the setting for our passage? The chapters leading up to 2 Samuel 9 are loaded with important historical events: in 2 Samuel 1 David grieves the deaths of both King Saul and Jonathan, David's friend. Chapter 2 tells us of David's being made king over Judah and the beginning of a civil war that ends in Chapter 4, resulting in David being inaugurated as king over all Israel in Chapter 5. The Ark of Covenant was brought to Jerusalem in Chapter 6 and the Davidic Covenant is made by God in Chapter 7. David's military victories bringing peace to ancient Israel are described in Chapter 8, so it was, that with peace over the land and God's covenant to make both David's house and kingdom last forever that we arrive at Chapter 9.
- What we'll do from our passage is use David's actions as a type or minor example of what Almighty God does and who He is. Put another way, we will not miss the forest for the trees, in that David actions are like small trees immediately in front of us, with God's actions being like a massive endless forest- which are much bigger, impactful and awe-inspiring.

Covenant Keeping God

As mentioned before, peace surrounds David and the Old Testament people of God – finally! And instead of trying to expand his kingdom's borders, demand allegiance from the people, or find ways to grow his personal wealth, what does David do? He purposes to do good, or as he said "show kindness." But the focus of that kindness is directed in a strange direction. It may not be strange to you or me, but culturally-speaking, for that time in history, the focus of his kindness was in a dangerous direction – the extended family of the previous king. Why would that be an issue???

- That extended family was viewed as a constant threat to the new royal family. Because of that it was common for the outgoing ruler's family to be completely killed off so as to prevent an uprising of that family and those people still loyal to them.
- In 2 Samuel 4 we read of how then 5 year old Mephibosheth, was picked up and carried away by his nurse who was trying to save his life after the deaths of both Saul and Jonathan. Her aim was to simply keep little Mephibosheth alive to save him from what she knew was coming. It's there that we also read how he became lame. (v4)

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was 5 years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

- Knowing that someone would soon be looking for even young Mephibosheth made the nurse leave quickly knowing his life and her life because of him, were both in grave danger. Mephibosheth likely lived with that same great fear all the days of his life from that one to the one described in our passage.

What was the reason or foundation for David wanting to show kindness? Answer found at the end of v.1, for the sake of Jonathan, his friend. For what it's worth, my position is that David and Jonathan were such good friends that their friendship is a model for biblical God-honoring Christian friendship. Their friendship, if fact, convicts me to be a better friend to my friends! This is the same position held and promoted by the true Christian church since the time of David and Jonathan; and the same Xian church and traditions would say any claim that more was going on than what the Scriptures state is a post-modern misreading and misinterpretation and thus an incorrect and false conclusion. Was David's desire random or was it based on something deeper and more meaningful? It was most certainly based on something deeper and more meaningful! Do the Scriptures record it? Why as a matter of fact they do. Where? In 1 Samuel 20.

- Saul, still king at that time, was growing more paranoid over losing his kingship to David. Because of this Saul had attempted to kill David on multiple occasions. In an effort to keep David alive, Jonathan offered to help David escape to safety. At their last meeting before David fled, both David and Jonathan made a covenant with each other. But as we read that covenant stretched farther than just those two men.
- As part of the covenant we read in 1 Samuel 20:15 Jonathan saying: Do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth. Later in v.42 Jonathan also says: Go in peace, because we both have sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'

Therefore, David in 2 Samuel 9, was doing what he had covenanted to do. The language from David and Jonathan's covenant in 1 Samuel 20:42 is interesting. This is the case because covenants and covenant-making are themes interwoven through each book of the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, traditional Presbyterians understand and embrace the covenants of Scripture so much that the frameworks of our theological system of doctrine, including who is a church member, why we baptize babies and even church government to name a few, are based upon our understanding of these covenants. But those frameworks are not established

and upheld by covenants made between people – like David and Jonathan. Those frameworks are all based on God’s covenants made by God with His covenant people across all time and history.

- David, in our passage, is merely following God’s example. One of those framework covenants – the Abrahamic Covenant - is found in Genesis. In Genesis 12 God tells Abram to leave his country and for his obedience God promised to make a great nation from him and that nation would bless all the families of the earth.
- In Genesis 15 God confirms this covenant using a custom of that day, by passing alone between a host of animals split in half. No Abraham did NOT pass through, also as this was a unilateral covenant to be kept and accomplished by God alone. 24 years after God called Abraham and his family out of his homeland, God also provided a sign to tell the world of His covenant with Abraham – the sign of circumcision.
- God reaffirmed this covenant in Genesis 17 by saying to Abraham: I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you... and I will be their God. Jonathan and David’s covenant has nearly identical language. That’s purposeful because their covenant was witnessed by God and made in the name of God also.

We continue to believe and promote and find confidence in the same promises God made to Abraham today; we even give a sign of that continuing promise to believers and their children in baptism. Beautifully, we will continue to do that until the ultimate fulfilment of that covenant arrives in the person of Jesus Christ at His second coming.

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That brings us to the high point of our passage! David remembered his covenant with Jonathan and his family, a member of that family has been found and brought to David, and Mephibosheth approaches the king’s throne. Mephibosheth knew the customs of the day. Because of that, he was likely trembling in fear assuming that his death was imminent. David, likely knowing what thoughts and emotions were overwhelming Mephibosheth, wasted no time in breaking the tension and fear. In v.7 of our passage David exclaims: Do not be afraid, for I will assuredly show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan.

- Did Mephibosheth know about David’s covenant with Jonathan? There is no way to know for certain, but it didn’t matter whether Mephibosheth knew, understood, or even wanted the benefits of the covenant in that moment – the fact was he was to benefit and be

blessed by the kindness, the generosity, the care, the provision and the love of the king!

- Did David put any stipulations on Mephibosheth before bestowing the kindness; were there any number of tasks for him to complete in order to earn that which was promised? No! All Mephibosheth had to do was to receive the blessings of the king with thanks and with joy.

From an outsider's perspective Mephibosheth had everything going against him; there was no reason for the king to show him these kindnesses and that level of mercy! Physically Mephibosheth was of no use to the king; he was born an enemy of the king; he had no rights to the king's house, and culturally he should've been dead already. Why, then, would the king pause and give him any time, any energy, any resources and any blessings?!?! Because the heart of the King is overflowing with compassion, forgiveness and most importantly covenant-keeping steadfast love for all generations forever and ever!

- Beloved of Christ, before the all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent God of the universe... we are ALL Mephibosheths!!!! We were born enemies of the king, we could not ever earn His blessings or favor; by the very sins we commit we are, by our own natures, no use to the King of kings and Lord of lords!!! And yet, by the covenant-keeping nature of Almighty God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - by His very nature which cannot help but show love to His chosen ones, He provides a seat at His banqueting table!

You who have repented of your sins and turned to Christ and Christ alone in faith to receive what the Father has promised through Him – your seat is already reserved. It is HARD to believe, yes! But don't just take my word for it, believe what God has said about you in His Word. (Eph2:4-7) God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Why has He done this? Eph2:8-9 So that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For [it is] by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

I close with the words of the song "Mystery of Mercy" by Caedmon's Call, which I think sums all this up beautifully. And no, I will not be singing it.

I am the woman at the well, I am a harlot // I am the scattered seed that fell along the path // I am the son that ran away // And I am the bitter son who stayed.

I am the angry man who came to stone the lover // I am the woman there
ashamed before the crowd // And I am the leper that gave thanks // And I
am the nine that never came.

You made the seed that made the tree // That made the cross that saved
me // You gave me hope when there was none // You gave me only your
Son.

My God, my God, why hast thou accepted me // When all my love was
vinegar to a thirsty king // My God, my God, why hast thou accepted me //
It's a Mystery of mercy and of song - The song that I sing.