

# The King's Grace Received

## 2 Samuel 9<sup>9</sup>

*Russ Kennedy*

Great stories can be great lenses through which we can see the character and the greatness of God...

The author of the book of Samuel is showing how the great king David ascended to the throne. He has also shown the troubles, trials and tests by which David grew in godliness and greatness. Often we have seen the character of David displayed in great deeds of courage, strength and wisdom. But now in this chapter, David's grace and kindness is put in display. For us, David becomes the spotlight on the amazing grace and sweet kindness of Jesus.

And so the story of a man named Mephibosheth...

### **Mephibosheth Lamed**

### **2 Samuel 4:4**

I want to begin with where he is introduced and how he came to be lamed.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled 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 as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

### **Who He Is**

It is very important for us to know who he is. He is: the grandson of Saul and the son of Jonathan.

We need a bit of the story to fill in the background. Saul was the first king of Israel. He had a son, named Jonathan. Because of Saul's sin, God planned to remove him from the kingship. God had anointed David to be king. But David was a soldier in Saul's army, a singer in Saul's household and the best friend to Jonathan. And Saul was jealous of him. So Saul tried to kill him, hounding him all over Israel and Philistia.

We are immediately confronted with the potential for a dilemma – now that David is King, how will he treat the descendants of Saul? What will he do to ensure that his own regency is never threatened by claims to the throne by a future son of Saul? Yet, Mephibosheth is the son of Jonathan. Will that make a difference?

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### ***How He Came to be Crippled***

The story here is set against the final climatic battle in which Saul was defeated and he and Jonathan, his son and friend of David, met their deaths. The Philistines, the hated enemies of Israel, killed Jonathan and dealt Saul a mortal wound. Saul killed himself rather than be captured.

But the defeat on the battlefield led to confusion and chaos back home. So, here is a five year old child, snatched up in haste by a nurse fearing for their lives. In her haste and reckless of limb she drops him, As result of the fall, his feet are so mangled that he is crippled for life. In the moment of King David's ascension and victory upon the death of Saul and Jonathan, Mephibosheth was lamed.

### **Mephibosheth Elevated**

### **2 Samuel 9:1-13**

Our story now opens with how Mephibosheth came to the King's palace...

#### ***The Intention of the King***

**(v.1-4)**

And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" <sup>2</sup> Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." <sup>3</sup> And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." <sup>4</sup> The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar."

David announces his intention to do good for someone in Saul's household on account of his love for Jonathan. He calls for and asks Ziba, Saul's household servant. Ziba comes and bows before the King. He has been managing Saul's former estate and household goods. You wonder what was in his mind when he is summoned before the King. Wonder if he is startled by the question?

David wants to know if there is anyone left of Saul's household that he can do something good for. Ziba tells him about Mephibosheth who is living in Lo-debar which is in the region of Gilead. David is reminded that Mephibosheth is crippled. The implication is that since he is crippled, he is not really worthy of David's attention.

The name of the place he is staying means "no pasture." According to its name, it was not a place for herds or flocks to thrive. It is there Mephibosheth is languishing. His person is crippled; his place is unthrifty; his prospects, unhopeful. But there is a king, generous and full of grace...

***The Summons by the King*****(v.5-6)**

5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant."

David had enquired as to where Mephibosheth is staying. Now, he sends and has him brought before him. When Mephibosheth comes, he bows low before David, acknowledging him as the true king. David calls him by his name and he responds in humility, identifying himself as David's servant.

***The Blessing from the King*****(v.7-12)**

David blesses Mephibosheth out of kindness and generosity.

7 And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." 8 And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"

**For the sake of his love for another (v.7-8)**

David promises to bless Mephibosheth because of his love and friendship with Jonathan. What David will do is not because of what he sees in Mephibosheth. He will care for him because of his love for Jonathan, whom he loved much.

This great mercy fuels wonder because of the helpless and low estate of the one who is being blessed. He is "a dead dog." This was a common term of deprecation. In its extreme form he is identifying himself as outside the house of Israel – a dead Gentile. Yet he still acknowledges that he is the king's servant.

**Restoring his family wealth and position (v.9-10)**

9 Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. 10 And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do."

Mephibosheth is given back all the wealth and servants that Saul had. This would have made him enormously wealthy, but without title. Ziba was made the steward of all this wealth in lands, crops and servants. Ziba himself had a large family and much personal wealth. So he was a man of standing, but the king is giving him the stewardship of the estate and was to serve Mephibosheth. Meanwhile, this crippled son of Jonathan would come to live in David's house. Mephibosheth would be welcomed around David's family table.

Possibly Ziba may not understand or even to accept what the King is doing. That the king would elevate a cripple and also entrust such a large estate into his hand may cause him to wonder. But he is willing to bow to the king's wishes and will. He does not appear to be resentful or resistant. He affirms the king's

authority. He acknowledges his own place as the king's servant. He is poised and prepared to do what the requires.

### **Treating him as his own son (v.11-12)**

So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. <sup>12</sup> And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants.

So here is the scene every evening around the supper table. There is David and all his sons – strong, strapping, handsome young men and Mephibosheth – crippled, yet loved and accepted and honored.

But the seeds of discontent are sown in that last sentence of verse 12. Ziba's sons and servants become the servants of Mephibosheth. In this sentence, Ziba is made the servant of Mephibosheth. HE may have a high place, power and prestige – but he is still the servant of cripple at the king's table.

### ***The Focus because of the King***

**(v.13)**

<sup>13</sup> So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

Just to be sure that we get it – here is the grand and glorious kindness of the king. Mephibosheth, the cripple, always at the king's table – not as a servant, but as a son.

And so it is with us. Dead dogs, sinners that we are, crippled by sin are all accepted at the High King's table because of His great love for Another and on account of and in behalf of Him, we are treated like sons. This, when we respond as humble, self-denying servants, is our great privilege – not to make much of us, but to make much of the King.

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## **Reflect and Respond**

Oh how we see the greater story of redemption in this wonderful text. We think of...

...our inability and desperate condition. We are crippled; no more than living dead dogs.

...the grace and compassion of the King. Our great God is full of mercy to sinners. When helpless and hopeless, there is a sovereign summons through faithful servants.

...such great kindness to us on behalf of the Another. God's saving mercies are not because of who or what we are. His glorious compassion loves us, chooses us, saves us all because of the Son He loves, Jesus.

...our placing as sons at the King's table. We were dead in sin. We are in many ways still crippled by the old we still live in. but we have been called to the table. There we sit cared for, fed, with a place in the family and hopes for the future. There at the head is our great King, Jesus.