

David's Finest Hour

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[0 : 00] But I want to look at this story about David Mephibosheth tonight. And I just want to speak a little bit about shadows, because shadows are very frustrating things. We know about shadows, they do point to the real thing, but they can often leave you with a kind of incomplete picture, can't they?

And questions and a bit of frustration, because you can't really see the real thing unless you have access to it. Sometimes we do when we have a shadow. And I think the Old Testament can be a bit like that for us.

When we read it, it can be quite difficult to understand and difficult to apply in our own lives and to our own circumstances. And so we do need to look at the Old Testament, we always need to look at the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus Christ, who is the real thing of which the Old Testament really is a shadow that points forward to Jesus.

It's always important to do that. But even then it can be hard work, even then it can be quite difficult to make sense of some of the things in the Old Testament. Maybe not so much this chapter, but certainly parts of the Old Testament, very difficult.

But what we do recognize and see is that throughout the Old Testament, we have a picture of God, and a picture of a covenant God, who makes promises, and who keeps promises, and is pointing forward to a day when he will reveal himself as the Messiah and the person of the Redeemer, the one who is to come to save his people.

[1 : 28] And he promises always into the chaos of life. And we're living in a lot of chaotic days, and it's important to remember his promises. It's important to remember his unflinching commitment to rescue, to forgive, and to love his people.

You and I from death to life. And what that means for you when you go out tomorrow, the significance and the importance of that. And what we find is that sometimes the teaching, hopefully not sometimes, hopefully always, we find the teaching of the Old Testament unfolds, even in shadow, God's purposes to his own people.

In a very different culture, certainly, to the one that we're used to, that ancient Near Eastern culture of kings and wars and brutality, which we sometimes recoil a little bit from when we read it.

And we think, this is not my world. I don't understand this. This is strange. And yet we're called to recognize God working in that situation, and we learn from him about how he expects us to live our lives in Christ through God our Savior in a world that we too are surrounded by enemies.

Different enemies, in a different context. You're not going to get, generally speaking, people running up to you with chariots and with spears and all kinds of stuff like that. But nonetheless, we know there's a spiritual warfare going on in our lives.

[2 : 52] So there's two things that I want to talk about this evening. The first is the global picture that we see of God at work in shadow here in this passage or in the passages surrounding it.

And then the personal work of God in shadow in the interaction between David and Mephibosheth. And we'll try and make sense of that for ourselves.

So what we recognize as we're going through the story of David particularly, God is establishing his kingdom. He's establishing a people and a nation and a country, a land, and a king over them.

And that becomes really clear in the chapter before and in the chapter after chapter 8 and chapter 10 are very interesting. We don't have time to read them. And in some ways, they're quite brutal chapters because it's all the stories of David defeating his enemies around him and destroying the enemies and setting up the land and the kingdom for his people.

And so what we do see, though, is that God is establishing a king in King David, a king after his own heart, a people, people that follow God and who are reliant on God as their saviour who has

redeemed them and on whom he pours out his hesed, his loving kindness, his grace.

[4 : 20] He pours that out on them. And they're establishing a homeland, a place to stay. Someone to follow a righteous king, David, and somewhere to live.

Somewhere to call home. That's not that unfamiliar, is it? So we have the king, a people, and a homeland. And it's to be a society that reflects God's own character.

A society that's loving and secure and just and fair. I think chapter 8 and verse 15 we're told that David reigned over all Israel doing what was just and right for all his people.

So it was to be a specific kind of nation. One that reflected God's justice and God's character. And it was also a nation that was founded on on God's help and God's strength.

So again in chapter 8 if you look at verse 6 in terms of the battles that David had it said the Lord gave David victory wherever he went. And then in verse 14 it repeats that.

[5 : 29] The Lord gave David victory wherever he went. So it was the nation the big global picture as it were was of God setting up a people a king and a nation and it was in God's strength and in reliance on God.

And it was always in the face of brutal opposition. So the surrounding nations would have none of it. They didn't want to worship the God of Israel.

They didn't want to come under his lordship. They wanted their own idolatrous lives and idolatrous ways of living. And it was it was kill or be killed.

That was the world in which you lived. it was they were there to destroy God's people and destroy the worship of God and his lordship and his exclusive claims and his people. They all wanted that wiped out.

So we find that God in the Old Testament is pointing forward by doing this. He's establishing a king and a people and a homeland.

[6 : 31] Now can we move out of the shadows for just a moment? And remember that Jesus sheds light on on all of this John 8 verse 12 he says I am the light of the world.

And he brings light into the shadows of even these Old Testament pictures and he reminds us that he is the greater king the greater son of David the one that we have put our trust in.

21st century Edinburgh we're the people that have put our trust in Jesus the great servant king the great son of David who is God but who is also one of us.

He's our idol as it were he's our god he's our king he's our hope he's our saviour and he alone is worthy of our worship who alone can satisfy our deepest needs he's our warrior king who's already won the battle on our behalf never leaves us he's the man it's too easy for us to lose sight of that it's too easy for us to drift along without thinking about Jesus to lack enthusiasm for Jesus Christ and just to forget how great he is that everything everything in the Old Testament is pointing towards this great climactic revelation of God in Christ and all of it is in shadow behind him and he's the God who meets our deepest needs the need for belonging that is a homeland isn't it that's what we need that's what the Old Testament people were speaking of and thinking of a land flowing with milk and honey good place that's what

God provides for his acceptance family love security ultimately a homeland which will be a physical place too new heavens and the new earth a place with no end date no eviction notice no borders a place to explore and a place of excitement and a place of joy and a place of learning and a place of exploration where we live in his in his company forever with the church as a family or the people of God as our family the ground which McClue is built which your houses are built scarred by sin and by all the effects of sin will be reclaimed forever in the new heavens and the new earth he's providing a home and a belonging and a fatherhood for us and that victory similarly to the victory of the Old Testament is a victory in the face of spiritual darkness enemies surrounding us you know today we can't get away from the reality of evil you simply can't do it it seems like there's new ways to invent evil all the time doesn't it can't get away from it we realise that the nations are under

[9 : 25] God's judgement and that evil provokes death and destruction and his lordship and his rule and his greatness is denied we see that we know that we experience that all around us Satan rails against God at every level but remember he is defeated on the cross not yet destroyed he thrashes around in his dying rage we recognise that and we we're realistic about that so our Christian life's a battle and your heart is a warfare and there's that reality that we face every day the war has been won but there's many battles that we still face as we live our Christian lives so there's a kind of global picture there in a sense a shadowy picture in the Old Testament victories and establishing of a kingdom which point forward to what God is doing in Christ what is happening just now that he's

establishing a spiritual kingdom a homeland of which we are a part but I want just to speak also briefly about the personal story that's in shadow here that speaks about grace personally that maybe takes it more into the living room or more into the church this evening and more into our own lives and how we respond because

I was saying this morning at St. Columbus you know it's it's really easy to be unchanged under God's word isn't it it's really easy to forget that we're part of a grace revolution and it's so it's a revolution not in macro terms but in heart terms so that every time we come under the word every time we're eyeball to eyeball with God in his word or in prayer or in preaching or in Bible study whatever it happens to be he's saying I've got something that I want to I want to transform in your life there's a response that I want you to give to the troubles you're facing there's an action of grace that I want you to put in place because the Christian road that we're on is a radical road it's a revolutionary road it's a different road certainly from the revolutions of the world where we live but nonetheless it's a grace revolution anyway that's me just dipping into this morning's sermon in case I run out of time it's personal in shadows and I think we need that because what we have here so you've got the big picture and I know it's difficult to understand the battles and we feel and a little bit distanced from all these battles and these victories and warfare and killings everything but now we come to this this great cameo this great this powerful cameo where we see

God's covenant love God's chesed love God's loving kindness what it looks like at eyeball to eyeball level between human beings it's a it's a little grace oasis as it were it's a shaft of light of grace light in the Old Testament shadow or the Old Testament attic it's a sun spot in the Old Testament shadowy garden and it's a place of warmth and attractiveness for us where we can see God's love at work and I hope that we can apply that to how we live our lives so you're a well-taught people here you all probably know the story of Mephibosheth and David and the background to it as well what we do have is the outworking of God's love in David's life I entitled this sermon David's Finest Hour and I genuinely believe this is King David's finest hour his interaction with Mephibosheth is the high point of his life doesn't get better

God is with him in these victories but this is the high point and I think the text is created to reveal that because from this point or from the next chapter on chapter 11 it speaks about his great downfall and his great failing and the exposing of his lust and selfishness in the story of Bathsheba and what follows from it and it really doesn't really get any better from then on this is the high point in many ways and that's good and that's important because we know that David loved the Lord we know he was a recipient of God's great grace and love in his life and we know that he shared that love with Jonathan he shared that love with the way he treated Saul even though he could have destroyed that whole family as the kings of his day had every right to do but he or Jonathan and him made a covenant in some of the earlier chapters chapter well it's back in 1st Samuel 20 and also 2nd Samuel 7 we've got these this great covenant that Jonathan made where David said look look after my family and covenant love you know whatever happens

Jonathan says will you please not destroy any of my descendants because of the love we share and because of because of the love God has shown us because of God's love for them that they were asking that Jonathan was asking who Jonathan who knew that David had every right to destroy any particular descendants of Jonathan and Saul who might usurp the throne wasn't it interesting that ended up David's own son that usurped the throne in Absalom anyway he made this covenant and David agreed in love and grace knowing God's love in his own life to protect and look after the descendants of Saul and Jonathan loyal love and forgiveness and grace was unbreakable strong bond and so we have this story where David just asked the question is anyone left is anyone left to Saul's family and who I can show kindness to same word loving kindness grace chesed for Jonathan's sake he said that great love for Jonathan and there was this

[16 : 13] Mephibosheth and so he calls for him and he calls for him to come to the house they summoned him to appear before David can you imagine what Mephibosheth was thinking curtains this is the end I've been found out been on the run most of my life things have been difficult completely unexpected call from the king love to a descendant of Saul no chance anonymous character don't know what he was doing up to this point but his background his bloodline was deadly he had injuries lifelong injuries that were a constant reminder to him of the fact that he'd been on the run for his life as a small child probably very poor dependent on others 2 Samuel 4 tells us that he was dropped by his nurse while they were running away for their lives and damaged his legs and he was never able to walk properly after that he himself had no self esteem called himself

a dead dog in verse 8 why on earth would you have any interest in me a dead dog it's quite interesting he's a dead dog and he's living in

Lodabar and that just means the land of nothing this guy's no great hero he's a crippled individual who is anonymous who's kind of scared of his life he has no great prospects and he's living in the land of nothing and the first thing David says to him is don't be afraid don't be afraid he had every right to be afraid he was really an enemy of David's in many ways he said I will surely show you kindness in verse 7 for the sake of your father Jonathan I will restore to you and he goes on this great generosity amazing generosity that he shows he restores his land he provides people to till the land to provide fruit and to provide income through that land he has fellowship at the king's table in Jerusalem for the rest of his life he has servants he has harvests he has income he's treated like a son he has no rights to any of it it's unreal beyond his wildest dreams he must say pinch me what's going on here am I dreaming this can't be happening it's like winning the lottery a hundred times over he had this amazing future ahead of him not that winning the lottery is any use of course I recognize that but speaking colloquially and using that illustration unbelievable generosity and grace was his so let's briefly shine the new testament light of grace on that story for ourselves where we see as time reveals itself God's covenant of grace revealed fully in the person of Jesus Christ and I think from this little glimpse of grace in David's finest hour we see him if I can talk like this way if I can talk this way most like Christ he's most like his greater son in what he does here he's a type of Christ but he's also and forgive me or forgive for those who are theologians here this might not be correct but

I think he's also an exemplar of a Christian a type of Christ but also an exemplar of a Christian he's reflecting God's love so we find sandwiched in the global shadows of chapter 8 and 10 this amazing picture of grace being outworked which points forward to his greater son Jesus because can I say I think if we reflect on this in many ways we are Mephibosheth we are the same as him before this great king before the greater son of David Jesus by nature we're hopeless before the king we have no rights we have every every right for God to reject us death awaits us without salvation and that's where sin holds us in a place of being enemies of

Christ and under his just wrath and judgment until we come to faith it's important to grasp that to remind ourselves lest we think we deserve anything from Jesus lest we think we're better than other people lest we think people out there deserve judgment but us in here we don't let's remind ourselves of who we were if you're Christians this evening who we were and how God's great grace was gifted to us and can I just ask if any of you share that same self loathing as Mephibosheth had for himself this dead dog when I was reading this passage that's always what stands out for me that you should notice a dead dog like me we live in a day and a generation where people self esteem is extremely low many people feel utterly worthless and insignificant feel like damaged goods unworthy of anyone or anything now if you're a

[22 : 23] Christian this evening and you feel like that I think you need to seriously reevaluate your understanding of grace and of God's love for you and his covenant love and his promises and his commitment and the great cost he's already paid for you to be free we kind of forget it and yet it's the greatest cost that he couldn't have done anymore for you to be sitting here this evening as a Christian up close and personal find your value and your identity and your worth and your significance and your purpose in life knowing his great love not just talking about it or understanding it theologically but soaking it in and taking it so that it changes the way we think about ourselves and who we are and understanding him and recognizing if you're not yet a

Christian if you feel that sense of hopelessness and worthlessness that is the world that we live in and that is the heart that sometimes sin exposes us to hear God's invitation in Jesus Christ and come to him for love and for life and for belonging and for hope and listen to the echo of God in this passage where David says don't be afraid you know that's the most probably the most common message that we get from heaven I'm not quite sure if this is apocryphal because I've never tested it out but there's supposed to be 365 do not be afraid in the Bible no I think there's actually 366 there's one for a leap here apparently there's certainly a lot of them because God knows isn't that good that God knows that we're often afraid and that we're often struggling and we're often battling as

Mephibosheth would have been here do not be afraid and we rejoice this evening because he's taken that great fear from our hearts and lives and remind ourselves when we look at a passage like this and think of what Mephibosheth was given what we're given spiritually in relation to what he

was given we're given everything everything that we need this is a bad dream this is a small bad dream in the light of eternity and the struggles and the battles we have here they're real they're significant but they're a drop in the ocean compared with the reality of what we have and what we have yet to be revealed in Christ a home and adoption resources we're sitting you know we celebrated the Lord's supper this morning in St.

Columbus because it's a picture of the feast that we will enjoy in the presence of Christ the wedding feast where there is tremendous provision and love and joy and an unbreakable shall we live that perspective and that hope which is significant for us isn't it he's sacrificed so that we can I can't even I can't even put into words what we receive you see what Mephibosheth gets here and it's just a shadowy picture of what is ours in Christ and God knows that I can't put it into words because he says it's beyond what we can ask or even imagine but the Old Testament the promises thunder out of the shadows as we look at them through the light of Jesus Christ so we are Mephibosheth and lastly and very briefly I also think we're David or that we're to take the example of

David I know that David in many ways is the type of Christ here but he's also a sinner that's saved by grace isn't he and he's an example of how to live out grace how to show it in his life and he shows it very powerfully with Mephibosheth because he understood at this point in the most powerful way in his life he understood God's grace to him and how that should make him act with others that's why truth is crucial for us tonight and in our Christian lives where the teaching the doctrine the truth the person of Christ understanding the gospel understanding the covenant why that is so important because until we understand his love for us and who we were and what he saved us from we've chosen and rescued and enriched we'll never act that out in our relationship with others unless we see what we've been saved from it will never impact or transform our hearts in the way we deal with others who are to be loved with that same covenant love

[27 : 50] I think that starts first in the Christian family see what's a real a real curse is a divided and a cold and a judgmental and a gossiping and a separated church family it's a church that doesn't understand grace it's a church that's not sacrificing itself for the greater cause it's a church that's just pedestrian in their understanding and it's a church that nobody will come into because who needs that we get that in the bowling club get that in the workplace get that everywhere else but the church is to be that great out working of grace it's to be the the radical community of a transformed people who have been turned upside down and inside out by God's grace as David was in the way he acted towards this son of Jonathan who he had every right to annihilate or ignore but here we see him acting in such a way and so we have to act on the basis of our understanding of what God has done for us with loyal love not just within the church but outside the church as well loving God loving one another loving our enemies it's a great triumvirate of the gospel isn't it that we also love those who persecute us us we love those who have no time for us we love those who seek to destroy us with the gospel of grace and with truth it's utterly and completely radical so I'll finish with the words of Van

Morrison you've got to live your religion deep inside when you try for the kingdom on high by his grace by his grace amen let's pray father god we ask and pray that you would help us to understand you understand your truth understand the revolutionary nature of truth that ironically probably the older we get the more darkness is revealed in our hearts because the deeper the light goes and the things you forgave and were patient with when we were younger Christians you now want to deal with and you want to transform and you want to change and so the great counterintuitive reality of your gospel is that we're being transformed more and more there's never an end to it we don't relax we never retire from it we're never complacent and we pray that we would see the need for grace patience understanding love commitment and sacrifice and cost in the great gift of salvation we've been given and in so doing help us to be as like

Jesus as we can be what an impossible task that seems to be Lord just like a rich man entering the kingdom of heaven impossible but we thank you for your own words which said these things with men are impossible but not so with God and we pray that we would take our impossibilities to you this evening when we want to grumble or complain or be greedy or selfish or proud or insular or can't be bothered with people or church or the bible or prayer and all the impossibilities that come into our lives day to day help us to take them to you and you're an understanding and patient and forgiving God and a provisional God you provide for us in all that we need and we pray for your provision and for that honesty with you may we learn from David may we give thanks for Mephibosheth and for the shadows that point forward to the great saviour

Jesus bless us we pray in Jesus name amen let's return praise to God in Psalm 126 well known Psalm well known words in the sing Psalms and it's just that hope of restoration and the reality of God working and it's been Zion's fortunes God restored it was a dream come true stand together praise him when Zion's fortunes God restored it was a dream come true our minds were then with laughter filled our tongues with songs anew the nation said the Lord has done great things for Israel the Lord did mighty things for us and joy our hearts knew well restore our fortunes gracious Lord like streams in desert soil a joyful harvest will reward the weeping sower's toil the man who bearing seed to sow goes out with tears of grief will come again with songs of joy bearing his harvest chief now may the [34 : 19] God have peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever amen