

David and Mephibosheth

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[0:00] 2nd Samuel chapter 9 we'll read together once again 2nd Samuel chapter 9 and David said is there still anyone left in the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake and of course the answer to that question was yes there was still someone left in the house of Saul a grandson of Saul a son of Jonathan whose name was Mephibosheth and David called for him and he said to him verse 7 do not fear 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 and this was Mephibosheth's response to David's invitation and he paid homage and said what is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I in verse 13 so Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and he ate always at the king's table now he was lame in both his feet on one of the rare occasions last week when I had some free time I was taken by a very kind student host to a museum in the very center of Seoul Korea and the museum was all about the history of the Korean nation and particularly it was about the Joseon and I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly probably not the

Joseon dynasty that reigned from 1392 to 1910 when of course Korea became an annex of Japan and then of course their troubles really started and etc but of course like any museum there were all these displays dating back all the way back to 1390 of the kind of places in which the kings lived the kind of servants that they had the kind of clothes that they wore and the kind of writing that there was and the language the culture and there were very little English translation unfortunately I wasn't able to pick up a huge amount but and my my friend the student didn't have very good English so he could only explain what he could about the history of the land the whole thing was so fascinating but I did feel as if I was on a different planet that's what happens when you you get to see a culture which is so strange from the culture that we belong to we are all children of the culture we belong to and we belong to the 21st century western sophisticated culture that has the benefit of of time and writing and thinking and history behind us and most of all of course what we seem to forget is that we have the benefit of the gospel and it has influenced our western culture far more than we ever thought but you do think when you're sort of transported in a museum all the way back and you're given to see the weird stuff that these people wore and the weird kind of language that they spoke you're given to think this just is so so strange and then you're reminded well who am I to think that I can cast judgment

I'm in my culture and they were in theirs and I have no right whatsoever to cast judgment simply on the basis of where I'm coming from but the other thing that struck me was how important it was that records be kept and I think it's true to say that wherever you go in the world if you go into any museum that gives artifacts or that displays relics of the past particularly when they're government relics or when they're royal relics you'll find that people always everywhere keep records and that's so important particularly when it comes to governments and kings they not only achieved events important events in the history of their nation but they recorded these events in order for subsequent generations to know what they did we're thankful that in the events of our the events of our history going back all the way hundreds of years were recorded meticulously for us because that's what history is all about and anyone who thinks that they can discard history as if it's irrelevant is completely mistaken that's what chapter 8 is about it's about the recording of the events of David

King David as he came and as his throne was established more and more and as as what happened in those days you you went to war with your sworn enemies war with countries like Moab and the Philistines Rehob king of Zobah he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates and David took from him 1700 horsemen it all seems so different doesn't it from the peaceful west that we are so accustomed to where things are done by negotiation and where diplomats are sent in when there is conflict but who are we to somehow think that we are superior to them and who are we to think that we can somehow cast judgment on David and say to him well what does he think he's doing when he takes the Moabites and he and what kind of ruthless man was David when he when he lay them all down all those he captured from the Moabite army when he lay them all down in three lines and two of the lines he put to death one of the lines he spared in order to become servants isn't that barbaric no it's war and all war

I suppose is barbaric but the easiest thing to do in the comfort of our situation is to sit in our armchairs and to and to theorize about what should or should not happen in war but David had to take decisions for the sake of the security of his kingdom and if that meant in his judgment having to eliminate two thirds of his enemy then so be it they didn't have massive prisons into which these men could be put if they let them away they were they were they were only creating a rod from their own back because a year from hence they would all come back again and perhaps David would be eliminated or he would be killed or his own army would be decimated or whatever when it comes to war there is no civilized way of waging it there was no Guantanamo Bay whatever you think of Guantanamo Bay there was no facility to capture your enemies and to hold them war was war and war was fought for the death now you might say well it's not fair that he should kill some and well what do you think he should do kill them all that's what by rights would would have happened in a war situation so surely it's better that he spared some of them rather than putting them all to death it's not for us to judge that was what he in his judgment decided to do it was a different time a different culture a different language from and there's one more reminder of how thankful we ought to be for where we live in this world the time and the place that we live we have so much benefit but unto whom much is given much will be required says

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God we live in a different time and what I suggest is instead of trying to cast judgment on David that we just simply accept what he did we don't need to say it was right or wrong it's a situation of war but first and foremost David had to secure the safety of his own kingdom and he had to do whatever was necessary in order to do that that was what the king's job was to lead and sometimes these decisions were not easy decisions they had to be taken painfully and sometimes I'm sure it wasn't easy for David to take a decision to destroy the lives of men whom even if they were his enemies so it's a royal record chapter 8 is a royal record and you'll find lots of records in the scriptures all of which goes to show me that the scripture is an accurate and a faithful account of what would actually happen but more importantly from the biblical point of view is verse 14 in chapter 8 because what that tells us is that the

Lord gave victory to David wherever he went why is that important because it meant that God was truly on the throne and God was fulfilling immediately the promises that we read about in the previous chapter that God would establish his name and that he would build a house for him this was God beginning to do just that and one of the things that you did you just did when you came to the throne was to make sure that your own throne was secure not only that your kingdom was secure but that your own throne was secure and that was especially if you replaced as king a different dynasty and that was what was happening here the previous dynasty well it was a dynasty of one because only Saul occupied the throne but by right it would have been expected that Saul's son

Jonathan ought to have taken the throne after him and then Jonathan's son would have taken the throne after him that's what a dynasty is all about but God had rejected the dynasty of Saul and he had raised up David because in David he found a man who was after his own heart this was God's doing nevertheless by the the natural expectations at that time one would have expected a son of Saul and I'm sure that the tribe of Benjamin would certainly have expected a son of Saul or at least someone who was a descendant of Saul to have taken the place that his place and that is where chapter nine comes into the story there was nothing unusual about the question that David asked is there anyone left in the house of Saul when he became king that's what you were expected to ask if you were a king who had replaced another dynasty but the reason that you asked that question as the new king was not to show kindness to the old dynasty but to eliminate everyone who belonged to the old king's house you'll find it elsewhere in the old testament it's what Ralph

Davis calls solidification by liquidation you'll find it in Basha in first kings chapter 15 27 to 30 you'll find it in Zimbri first kings chapter 16 8 to 13 you'll find it in Jehu second kings chapter 10 1 to 11 a king comes to the throne replaces another king and first thing he does is eliminates the family of the previous king in order to eliminate the threat anyone in that family who claimed who laid claim to the throne because as long as they were alive and as long as they laid claim to the throne there was always going to be somebody in the family or in the tribe who would support them and before you knew it you had a rebellion on your hands so the best thing to do the safest thing to do was right away nip it in the bud and just get rid of the previous king's family so there was nothing unusual about the question is there anyone left in the house of Saul but the question was not asked in order to eliminate the house of Saul that's what you would expect the question was asked for an entirely different reason altogether instead of intending to eliminate the family of Saul

David's intention was to show kindness to show a particular kind of kindness it was entirely unexpected in some senses it was entirely illogical there may have been there may well have been those of David's friends and those of his age who have said you are out of your head what are you doing showing kindness to someone who is a potential threat to you who actually is in theory an enemy to you even although he is lame in both feet that doesn't matter he still lays claim to the throne of his father and his grandfather there may very well have been those of David's staff who would have thought him having lost his senses altogether in actually showing kindness to someone there's a particular word in the bible that describes when a unique kindness is shown to someone unexpectedly and that word is the word grace and I want us to see in this wonderful story in chapter 9 of how instead of killing Mephibosheth as would have been expected David actually took him into his own house as his friend and showed him the most extraordinary kindness and I want us to see tonight that that is a picture of God himself and the kind of unique kindness that he has shown to his enemies you and me in the gospel and I want us to do that in in four ways I want us to think first of all as about the question that grace asked the question that grace asked that's a question of course we've already read at the beginning of the chapter when David said is there anyone else left in the house of

[16:27] Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake there's nothing strange about showing kindness to your friends we all do that that's what that's what friendship is all about there are people in the world I'm quite sure who are close to you and who to whom you want to be kind and for whom you would do pretty much anything you would you would spend money on them you would give them you would help them you would you would assist them in any way you possibly could if they were in trouble because they're your friends but this man was a potential enemy of David this man was a potential threat to David there was no royal reason now you might think well perhaps there was the memory of his father Jonathan who was a friend to David in the past or perhaps it was that David showed pity to

Mephibosheth because he had had an accident when he was five years old his nurse had been fleeing with him she had tried to carry him she had dropped him first Samuel chapter 2 Samuel chapter 4 tells us this that she had dropped him in the heat of the battle she had dropped him he had broken his legs of course there was no hospitals in those days and if you broke your legs badly you were in big trouble you were likely to be lame for the rest of your life that is exactly what happened this poor man was crippled he had grown up crippled but not so as not to have a family he had a wife and he had a family and so he wasn't so debilitated that he wasn't able to live some kind of normal life but he was disabled there's no question about it but there is no suggestion here of any kind of that David showed kindness to this man just simply because he took pity of him there is only one reason why David showed kindness to Mephibosheth and that was because years before he and his father Jonathan had made a covenant that's why we read it in 1st Samuel chapter 20 you remember when Saul was threatening

David and David and Jonathan were close friends they had this extraordinarily close friendship and they had made a covenant promise to one another to protect one another to look out for one another and that covenant extended beyond themselves to their families and David remembered that covenant because a covenant could not be broken it's one thing I guess to make a covenant years before now David is on the throne and the reality of the situation has dawned on him he's now living the reality of that which actually means that if he's going to keep the covenant that he made with Jonathan he's going to have to look after Jonathan's son even although there may be a claim to the throne but that didn't matter to David because what mattered was the covenant itself you see in the Bible covenant is a very very solemn event we've read about it before you'll find it all the way through the

Old Testament actually you find it in the New Testament as well it's the way that God operates we'll see that in a few moments by promise and David had made a promise to Jonathan you see in the Bible promises were important vows were important when you promised something you were doing something that was before God there was a whole procedure that you went through I don't have time to go through it in which animals were cut in half they were killed and cut in half and you walked in the middle of the path that was created by the two halves of the animals there was a solemn procedure that you went through before God all covenants are solemn whenever you make a promise before God actually any promise is a very solemn thing I think that our world has lost sight of the value of a promise if you're not going to keep a promise don't make it in the first place that's what the

Bible tells you it's better to not vow at all than to make a vow and not keep it when you make a vow before God you're doing something that you ought to be walking into with both eyes open knowing exactly what it's going to cost you and what it's going to mean to fulfill I'm saying that because of the times that we do make promises like baptism for example when parents stand at the front of the church and they promise before God that's what's asked to them do you promise before God that you will bring up your children and the nurture and the discipline the instruction the love of God it's all very well in the niceness of the occasion to make that promise to nod we've all been there at least at least many of us have been there but then the reality when the reality sets in then we discover what it means to keep that promise well don't make the promise unless you intend to keep it because God is watching God is listening he's present and it's best not to keep a vow at all unless it's the same with marriage marriage is a covenant where you promise before

[22:16] God and the presence of the congregation again our modern world seems to think seems to have jettisoned the value of promise and the value of sticking to something that you have vowed again I'm not going to get into any of these specific areas but but all I'm all I'm trying to say is that a covenant was something that was massively important and the second thing I want us to see is this that that David said is there someone in the house of salt that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake kindness for Jonathan's sake sake the second thing I want to want to say is that not only is the the question that

David asked but the particular love the kindness that grace showed when we talk about kindness we talk about somebody helping an old lady across the road or somebody doing a favor to a friend doing a kindness but when the Bible talks about this kind of kindness there is a kindness in the Bible that is a particular kindness it's called hezed in the old language it's called hezed and it's very it's one of these words that's actually worth remembering hezed c-h-e-s-e-d hezed because it's absolutely wonderful it's it lies at the heart of everything the Bible is about because it's that peculiar kindness that peculiar love love is a better word but again in our day love is interpreted in different ways anyway love is is can only be understood right when it's rooted in God rooted in the

Bible can only really discover what love really is when you read the Bible when you get to know the Bible because that takes us to the heart of what we are and what God is the particular love that grace showed was a love that God had showed to David you remember in 2 Samuel chapter 7 that God had promised David that he had taken him from the shepherd's field and he had raised him up to the highest position that he possibly could have in Israel and remember David's response to that who am I that God should show me such such undying love but that is the love and the commitment and the faithfulness that God showed to David but more than that David's kindness or his love or his hezed to

Mephibosheth is a reflection of the love that God has showed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ in giving him his only begotten son because he so loved the world because he so loved a sinful dark rebellious world a world that did not deserve that love and a world that by rights by logical rights deserved only to be eliminated because of our rebellion against God God but instead of eliminating that world God himself came into that world in the person of Jesus Christ he suffered and died in that world at the hands of the men who crucified the Lord Jesus at Calvary and on the cross took the punishment that we deserved so that instead of us being punished because of our sin

God himself took that punishment in Jesus Christ he went to where we should have gone now that's love that you'll never find anywhere else in the world a love that doesn't just say I love you but a love that does it and does all that is possible to secure our salvation and our forgiveness and our liberty that's love and that's Chesed a kindness that God has showed to us when we were his enemies that's what Paul can't get over you read Romans chapter 5 you get the sense that Paul cannot get over why God should have loved him while he was still an enemy of God herein he says God commands he demonstrates his own particular love for us in that while we were still sinners while we're still rebelling against him while we're still doing stuff that was shameful and dark and wrong and sinful and loving every moment of it

[27 : 31] Christ died for us in order to redeem us and to bring us back to himself and to save us and to deliver us from a world of sin and shame and darkness but I want us to notice thirdly the place that grace gave to Mephibosheth it wasn't enough for David to say to Mephibosheth by the way Mephibosheth and you can see of course when you look at it in the light of how I've explained it you can see why Mephibosheth bowed to the ground because he didn't know what was coming he came to the king the king called for him perhaps he expected the king to order that his head would be cut off so Mephibosheth came and he fell on his face and he paid homage and David said Mephibosheth and he answered behold I am your servant and David said to him exactly the opposite to what Mephibosheth would otherwise have expected he said 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 but he went further than that that would have been good enough but he said look I am not content just to give you the land just to secure your safety I want you at my table I am going to bring you into my household you are going to sit with me with my sons and my daughters at my table every night so that I can speak to you so that you can be part of my family and that is what God has done to us exactly the same John say the apostle John says this behold he says what kind of love the father has shown to us that we should be called the sons and the daughters the children of God what does that mean it means that we have access to God just like Mephibosheth every day had access to the king himself he could see him face to face right across the table

David would say to Mephibosheth come there's your place there's your food welcome how's it going what kind of day did you have how are your family how are your fields going how's your work going do you have any problems because David deeply and sincerely loved this man because of the covenant that he had made with his father do you know what it's the same with us we have access if you belong to Jesus today you have access at the king's table on a day by day basis you have access that's what Paul says we have access into this grace in which we stand in which case you don't have to beg an audience with the king you already have that the moment you open your mouth in prayer

God is listening he's there with you all the time the problem of course is that we don't realize it we're on our own so much and we think on our own we're so independently minded aren't we we don't think in terms of bringing things to the Lord in prayer we like to take all our burdens upon ourselves and we like to sort out our own problems if only we lived the life that actually God has given to us and brought to the Lord all our cares and our complexities our questions our doubts our fears on a day by day basis just pour your heart out to the Lord because he's there you're at his table you have access to him he's the king he can do whatever he wants he's listening to you he's promised to listen to you he takes a deep his love for you is greater than you can imagine because of what he's done for you in Jesus

Christ behold says John behold stop and think what manner what kind of love the father has given to us that we should be called the sons of God having been adopted into his family so you go out tonight in confidence if you belong to the Lord you go out in confidence knowing that God is your father and that you have a place at his table and that you can bring anything to him knowing that he cares deeply for every element every aspect of your life don't leave anything out you bring everything to him take it to the Lord in prayer and then lastly I want you to notice the surprise that grace creates Mephibosheth said who am I he says what is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as

[32 : 44] I all of a sudden he saw what was happening that instead of getting what he might have expected that David was going to do the opposite and he was going to do more than the opposite more than he could ask or even think David was going to do something for him that went beyond his wildest expectations and it filled him with a sense of utter humility and he never forgot at least I hope he never forgot there was a question about where his allegiance lay later on we'll come and see that later on it's a very very interesting part when Absalom rises up against David Ziba his servant actually accused Mephibosheth of taking Absalom's side but that's highly doubtful but never mind that for the moment let's leave that aside until we come to it but I hope that

Mephibosheth never ever lost that sense of wonder at the grace that David showed to him and I hope that every single day even although he came every single day and sometimes familiarity breeds contempt and complacency doesn't it the older we get as Christians sometimes we lose sight of what we really have in the Lord you ask the Lord if you're an old Christian that's one of the dangers that you face maybe maybe I don't know what an old Christian is but whatever you do don't lose sight of what God has done for you whatever ever ever else you do don't lose sight of what God has done for you and the wonder and the question as to where you would be tonight if it wasn't for the grace of God if it wasn't that God had called you into his kingdom where would you be I don't know where I would be I often ask myself that question I have no idea I shudder to think where I would be tonight what kind of a person

I would be I'm bad enough as it is but if I wasn't a Christian who knows what I'd be doing and neither should we forget like Ruth remember Ruth when she came in from the land of Moab and when again a picture of the grace of God when Boaz came to her and where he showed her that same undeserved kindness she was a stranger she was a sworn enemy of the people of God and yet Boaz instead of marginalizing her and consigning her to the realms of poverty he took her in eventually married her and she was the same I can't believe this she says I can't take this in why should this man take notice of me I'm a stranger in Israel well it's the same with us isn't it why should God love us so much and it's not just the kind of the kind of love that just takes pity on us that's not what it is at all it's an immense love it's an extraordinary love it's a love that nothing can change and you can't find anywhere else and you can't improve on it you can't lessen it and you can't improve on it nothing can separate us

Paul says from the love of God in Christ Jesus the love that has died for us the love that has called us to be his that's claimed us for his own the love that has that has promised us everlasting life that extends beyond this life into eternity where we will forever be with the Lord the love that has promised to take care of our every need that doesn't mean that we're going to get everything that we want or even everything that we pray for but it promises that God will keep nothing from us that we need he will supply all our needs according to his riches in mercy now that's love that we don't deserve and that's love that we ought to be surprised at that we ought never ever to forget so when we think about our lives and what they are when we take an honest look at our past what we were before we came to know the

Lord there's nothing wrong with that as long as that past doesn't overwhelm us and persuade us that we're beyond reach nobody's beyond reach nothing is beyond the grace of God so that's why I say to you tonight if you're not a Christian would you like to know that grace for yourself because that's what God comes to us with in the gospel an invitation an open door that has been opened by the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that all may come in and that includes those who are ashamed of all that they've done in the past the foolishness you think of the worst day of your whole life a day that perhaps I don't know I don't know what you did think of the worst day of your life

[38 : 25] God has eliminated it the guilt the shame the darkness in the Lord Jesus Christ and if that not if that doesn't create within you a sense of not only thankfulness but utter amazement and astonishment what God has done then I don't know what will and if you're not a Christian then come come to the table come to the to know the Lord come in that's what he says to you he says come put your trust in me take what I have done on the cross the death that he died in order to secure our salvation he asks you tonight he invites you tonight to come to know that death for yourself to trust in him to follow him to surrender your all to him so that like

Mephibosheth you will know that extraordinary security that life that shall never end and that love from which nothing can separate us let's bow our heads in prayer our father in heaven we thank you for the examples that we have in the scriptures that demonstrate the love of God in Christ Jesus or that just give us a glimpse of what you are going to do one day in the Lord Jesus Christ and we thank you Lord that in this little story that we've just read and the kindness and the faithfulness that David showed to Mephibosheth we pray that we will see in that story something of what you did ultimately on the cross for we ask in Jesus now to in this