

2 Samuel 8-9
September 24, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What do you think is God's standard for friendship? [Let people engage] And to take it a step further, how does God's standard for friendship differ from the world's standard of friendship? [Let people engage]

Transition: We are going to see a summary of David's victories in chapter 8 as God gave David the territories He had originally promised Israel. But the more touching part of today's text is watching how David honored his friendship covenant with Jonathan by taking in Mephibosheth.

This story is not just an example of showing kindness to others. While showing kindness is something we should do, we need to be careful not to miss the greater point. Instead of only looking to David for a lesson of application, we need to identify with Mephibosheth's story of disgrace, redemption, and restoration. What David did for Mephibosheth foreshadows what God does for us through Jesus. Let's begin.

BOOK:

David's Victories

8 In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath from the control of the Philistines.

² David also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute.

³ Moreover, David fought Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when he went to restore his control along the Euphrates River. ⁴ David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstringed all but a hundred of the chariot horses. (This may seem an odd detail, but it was likely out of obedience to God's command for kings not to acquire many horses (see Deuteronomy 17:16))

⁵ When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them. ⁶ He put garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to him and brought tribute. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

⁷ David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ From Tebah and Berothai, towns that belonged to Hadadezer, King David took a great quantity of bronze.

⁹ When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰ he sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory in battle over Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Joram brought with him articles of silver and gold and bronze.

¹¹ King David dedicated these articles to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued: ¹² Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. He also dedicated the plunder taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

¹³ And David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

¹⁴ He put garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

David's Officials

¹⁵ David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people. ¹⁶ Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁷ Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was secretary; ¹⁸ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were royal advisers (priests).

David and Mephibosheth

9 David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

² Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?"

"Your servant," he replied.

³ The king asked, "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?"

Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."

⁴ "Where is he?" the king asked.

Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

⁵ So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.

⁶ When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor.

David said, "Mephibosheth!"

"Your servant," he replied.

⁷ "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."

⁸ Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

⁹ Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. ¹⁰ You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

¹² Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³ And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

David's grace to Mephibosheth is also a pattern for us in serving and ministering to others. We are David.

- We should seek out our enemies and seek to bless them.
- We should look for the poor, weak, lame, and hidden to bless them.
- We should bless others when they don't deserve it and bless them more than they deserve.
- We should bless others for the sake of someone else.
- We must show the kindness of God to others.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 9). Victor Books.

This chapter presents a moving illustration of the salvation we have in Christ. David's treatment of Mephibosheth is certainly that of a "man after God's own heart."

I. Mephibosheth—The Lost Sinner

A. He was born in a rejected family.

As the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth was a member of a rejected family. He was a son of a prince, yet was living in dependence on others away from the city of Jerusalem. Every lost sinner today is born in sin, born into Adam's family, and is thus under condemnation (Rom. 5:12ff; Eph. 2:1–3).

B. He experienced a fall and could not walk.

Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet (vv. 3, 13) and thus could not walk. All people today are sinners because of the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12), and they cannot walk so as to please God. Instead of walking in obedience, sinners walk "according to the course of this world" (Eph. 2:2). They may try to walk to please God, but no amount of self-effort or good works will save them.

C. He was missing the best.

Mephibosheth lived at Lo-debar which means "no pasture." That is a fitting description of this present world—no pasture, no place for the souls to be satisfied. Sinners are hungry and thirsty, but this world and its pleasures cannot satisfy.

D. He would have perished without David's help.

We would never have heard of Mephibosheth were it not for the gracious steps David took to save him. His name was written down in God's Word because David reached him and helped him.

The lost sinner is in a tragic situation. He has fallen; he cannot walk to please God; he is separated from home; he is under condemnation; he cannot help himself.

II. David—The Gracious Savior

A. David made the first move.

Salvation is of the Lord! He must take the first steps, because the lost sinner will not by nature seek God (Rom. 3:10–12). David sent for poor Mephibosheth, just as God sent Christ to this earth to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

B. David acted for Jonathan's sake.

This grew out of the loving covenant that David had made with Jonathan years before (1 Sam. 20:11–23). David had never seen Mephibosheth, yet he loved him for Jonathan's sake. We are not saved because of our own merit; we are saved for the sake of Christ. We are forgiven for His

sake (Eph. 4:32). We are accepted “in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). It was part of that “everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20–21) that the Father should save for Jesus’ sake all that trust the Savior.

C. It was an act of kindness.

In v. 3, David calls it “the kindness of God.” Christ shows His kindness to us in saving us (Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4–7). David’s throne was a throne of grace, not a throne of justice. Mephibosheth had no claim upon David; he had absolutely no case to present. Had he appeared before that throne asking for justice, he would have received condemnation.

D. David called him personally and he came.

David sent a servant to bring him (v. 5), but the servant then stepped out of the way to make room for the king. Nobody is saved by a preacher or evangelist; all the servant can do is usher the sinner into the presence of Christ. Note how Mephibosheth fell humbly before David, for he knew his place as a condemned man. How tenderly David said, “Mephibosheth.”

E. David took him into his own family.

Like many sinners today, Mephibosheth wanted to work his way into forgiveness (vv. 6, 8), but David made him a son (v. 11). The Prodigal Son wanted to be a servant too, but no one can earn salvation (Luke 15:18–19). “Beloved, now are we the sons of God!” See 1 John 3:1–2 and John 1:11–13.

F. David spoke peace to him.

“Fear not!” were David’s words of grace to the trembling crippled man; and “Fear not!” is what Christ says to every believing sinner. “There is therefore now no condemnation . . .” (Rom. 8:1). Through the Word of God before us and the Spirit of God within us, we experience peace.

G. David provided for his every need.

Mephibosheth would no longer live at “no pasture”; for now he would eat daily at the king’s table. Furthermore, the servant Ziba and his sons became servants to Mephibosheth. And David gave to Mephibosheth all of the inheritance that belonged to him. So Christ satisfies the spiritual and material needs of His family. He has given us an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:11, 18; 1 Peter 1:4ff; Col. 1:12). If he gave us our rightful inheritance, we would go to hell! But in His grace He has chosen us to share His inheritance with Him, for we are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 465-466) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

D. David’s campaigns (chap. 8)

8:1–2. God had promised as part of His covenant with **David** that He would give Israel rest from all her enemies (7:11). He now began to do that very thing. First, **the Philistines**, Israel’s perennial enemies for more than 125 years, were attacked and **defeated** at **Metheg Ammah**, a town otherwise unknown. Next **David** attacked **the Moabites**, putting **two** out of every three prisoners **to death**. The survivors he put in bondage to Israel, which implies that Moab became a vassal state **to David** as the great king. The reason for this harsh treatment is baffling since David had ancestral roots in Moab and relationships up until then appear to have been amicable (1 Sam. 22:3–4).

8:3–8. **The Arameans** then became David’s objective. Consisting of a loose federation of city-states, the Arameans rose to prominence the same time Israel’s monarchy rose under Saul and David. David first made an assault against **Hadadezer** (or Hadarezer), **king of Zobah**, an area just north of Damascus. Hadadezer had gone on a campaign to **the Euphrates River** to recover some territory, and in his absence **David** struck. His victory over these Arameans gained him prisoners (**7,000 charioteers and 20,000 foot soldiers**), 1,000 **chariots**, and **100 of the chariot horses**, the latter used for the first time to field a chariot corps in Israel. (Though the Heb. in v. 4 reads “1,700 charioteers,” 1 Chron. 18:4, probably a better-preserved text, reads, as the NIV has it, “1,000 of his chariots [and] 7,000 charioteers.”) Before David could return, he and his men were attacked by the Aramean troops **of Damascus**. Again **David** prevailed, and after slaying **22,000 of** the enemy, he established an occupation force in **Damascus**, thus making Damascus another client state to Israel, required to pay **tribute**. Finally he returned **to Jerusalem** triumphantly, bringing **gold shields** and much **bronze** as trophies of conquest.

8:9–12. Having witnessed David’s remarkable military successes, **Tou** (Heb. *Toi*) **king of the** Aramean city-state of **Hamath**, decided to capitulate without struggle and become a vassal of Israel. To symbolize this move **he sent his son Joram** (or Hadoram, 1 Chron. 18:10) to **David** laden with precious **articles of silver and gold and bronze**. These **David** added to all the other spoils he had gained in previous campaigns (2 Sam. 8:11–12): **Edom** (cf. v. 14); **Moab** (cf. v. 2); **Ammonites** (cf. chap. 10); **Philistines** (cf. 8:1); **and Amalek** (David’s conquest of Amalek is not narrated in the OT). All these spoils he **dedicated** to the service of **the LORD** (cf. 1 Kings 7:51).

8:13–14. Finally **David** gained farflung fame by defeating an Aramean army of **18,000 in the Valley of Salt**, a marshy plain south of the Dead Sea. Though “Aram” (i.e., “Arameans”) is in most Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint and some other versions have “Edom,” a reading that is also supported by a few Hebrew manuscripts and by 1 Chronicles 18:12. The difference in the original language is in only one letter: *d* (as in Edom) and *r* (as in Aram), easily confused in Hebrew. If “Aramean,” it may be that the Edomites had solicited Aramean help against Israel. In any event, David again prevailed and brought Edom also under his hegemony. **The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went.**

8:15–18. The creation of an empire, though still small in comparison with the great powers of today, required the creation of a bureaucracy to administer its affairs. The principal officers were **Joab**, military commander; **Jehoshaphat**, record keeper; **Zadok** and **Ahimelech** chief **priests**; **Seraiah ... secretary**; **Benaiah** (cf. 23:2–23), leader of the elite Kerethite and Pelethite troops (also mentioned in 1 Sam. 30:14; 2 Sam. 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Chron. 18:17; Ezek. 25:16; Zeph. 2:5, and possibly related to the Philistines in some way); **and David’s own sons were royal advisers** (*kōhānīm*). This Hebrew word, usually rendered “priests,” is explained in 1 Chronicles 18:17 as “chief officials” (cf. 2 Sam. 20:26). This no doubt is the better meaning since David’s sons, as Judeans, were ineligible to serve as priests. The mention of Zadok and

Ahimelech together (8:17) indicates the transition that was occurring in the office of priest. Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, was a descendant of Eli (see the chart “The Ancestry of Zadok and Abiathar”), whose priestly line Samuel had said would come to an end (1 Sam. 3:10–14). Zadok was a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar (1 Chron. 6:4–8). Through Zadok the line of priests eventually continued through the remainder of Old Testament times.

E. David’s kindness to Saul’s family (chap. 9)

This chapter introduces what is sometimes called the “Succession Narrative,” a literary piece which includes chapters 9–20. Its purpose is to show the steps David undertook to succeed Saul and to establish the permanence of his own dynasty. David’s first step was to solicit the support of the Northern tribes by extending favor to the surviving members of Saul’s household.

9:1–8. **David** had pledged to Jonathan that he would never forget the covenant of friendship that had bound them together (1 Sam. 20:14–17). He therefore called **Ziba**, a **servant** of Saul, and **asked** him if some member of Saul’s family had special need (2 Sam. 9:2–3; cf. 1 Sam. 20:42). **Ziba** replied that **Mephibosheth**, the lame **son of Jonathan** (2 Sam. 4:4), was still alive and living at **Lo Debar** (just east of the Jordan, five miles south of the Wadi Yarmuk; cf. 17:27). **David** immediately sent for **him**, restored Saul’s personal estate to him, and supported him on a royal pension (9:7). In humility **Mephibosheth** referred to himself as David’s **servant** (v. 6) and as **a dead dog** (v. 8), that is, worthless (cf. 16:9).

9:9–13. **David** instructed **Ziba** and his **15 sons and 20 servants** to **farm** Mephibosheth’s **land** and to treat him as David’s own son (9:9–11). David’s provision for **Mephibosheth** and his letting him eat **at the king’s table** (vv. 7, 10–11, 13) again demonstrated David’s magnanimous heart. In all this David showed **kindness** (*hesed*, “loyal love”) **for Jonathan’s sake** (v. 1; cf. v. 7).

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 125). Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

David’s Victory (8:1–18). God’s promises for David’s kingdom were first realized through the military and administrative successes of his rule. David subjugated the Philistines in the west, the Moabites in the east, Zobah and Damascus in the north, and the Edomites in the south. Indeed, “The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.”

The expanding bureaucracy included the mercenary soldiers of the Kerethites (Crete) and Perethites (Philistines?) under the command of Benaiah (see 15:18; 20:7, 23). Abiathar was joined by Zadok as priest. Civil advisers included a recorder and a secretary.

David and Mephibosheth (9:1–13). David was not only an effective warrior and administrator, but he also was a beneficent ruler. He desired to honor the pledge he had made to Jonathan and his family (1 Sam. 20:14–15). He inquired and learned from Ziba, a servant in Saul’s household, about Mephibosheth, who was Jonathan’s only surviving son. Mephibosheth was crippled and lived in obscurity. When he was brought before David, the king calmed his fears and returned Saul’s property to him. Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and ate at the king’s table.

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 2 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 183-184). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

A Summary of David's Victories (2 Sam. 8:1–18)

The passage—For a long time the Philistines had been one of the major problems of Israel. Both Saul and David had spent much time in fighting them. They were a constant threat to the security of the kingdom. David subdued them.

The Moabites were defeated and made servants to the Israelites. David put many of them to death, and the remainder of them were forced to pay tribute as a subjected people.

David extended his territories by defeating the Syrians. They were described as being in two groups. He conquered Zobah first and then the Syrians of Damascus. He slew twenty-two thousand men in the battles. The remainder of the Syrians were forced into the position of bringing tribute regularly to David. Much wealth of gold shields and bronze was brought back as spoil to Jerusalem.

David's Kindness to Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1–13)

The passage—David never forgot his love for Jonathan. It was a friendship as deep as life itself. He wondered if there were descendants of Saul to whom he might show mercy for Jonathan's sake. He was delighted to learn through Ziba that Jonathan had a son still alive. He learned the story of Mephibosheth. (Read the passage on Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 4:4.) David sent for him.

Mephibosheth had every reason to be afraid of David. It was the custom in those days for any new king to destroy all of the descendants of rival dynasties. He fell on his face before David, but David assured him he had nothing but kindness for him. He promised to restore to him all of the lands that had formerly belonged to Saul. He would receive the income from the lands as long as he lived. Mephibosheth would always be a guest at David's table.

Special points—It is difficult to understand the strange mixture of cruelty and kindness in David and those of his day. He could order the execution of thousands of men, women, and children. At the same time he never forgot the love he had for the friend of his youth, Jonathan. In every person there is both the capacity for severity and gentleness.

Truth for today—The capacity for making lasting relationships is a quality of spiritual health. True love continues in spite of all circumstances. Not even death could make David forget Jonathan. His gratitude could not be expressed directly, but he sought some way to honor the house of Saul. He never got away from that awesome respect he had for "God's anointed." In our day there could well be a return to a higher respect for those who are specially singled out to serve the Lord.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 8-9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.