The kindness of God

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[0:00] In the second book of Samuel, the ninth chapter at the third verse, 2 Samuel chapter 9 at verse 3, it is written, And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?

In this and in the following chapter, we find David at the very climax of his long career.
Hitherto in the chapters in 1 and 2 Samuel before this, we find the record of his struggle during the formative years of his character, his fight to preserve his life from King Saul, his efforts first to establish and then to unite and consolidate his kingdom, and to maintain it from his enemy.
All that's come before, all that's behind him, and now David has reached the very summit of his career. Israel has become a world power, enjoying great national peace and prosperity.
The Lord, we are told, the Lord had given David rest from his enemy. Very soon, very soon in chapter 11, we find the beginning of the sequel to this, the sad story of David's adultery with Bathsheba, and all the consequences of that foolish and fatal act.
[1:51] The family problems that it led to, a sad anticlimax to a great career, a career which ended in civil war, and family disunity, and trouble of one kind or another.

But all that's still in the future. And David is here enjoying peace and prosperity. The past behind him, the future of his problems still to come.
And these chapters 9 and 10 mark the turning point, the climax of David's life. And what does he do? What does he do when he reaches the stage of peace and prosperity, of victory, of triumph?
We see him seeking an opportunity to do good by showing kindness to the family of Jonathan. And we see him searching out for this man Mephibosheth.
And we read the account of the honour that was given to Mephibosheth out of the kindness of David's heart. When we look at this act of kindness, we see, first of all, that it was an act of deliberate kindness.
[3:10] King David took the initiative. He didn't wait for Mephibosheth to come to him and to ask for help or whatever.

He sought him out. He looked for him. He took the trouble to go and find that Mephibosheth existed and then where he was. What a contrast that provides, doesn't it, to ourselves so often.
We are very glad to help people if they come and ask us. We are very willing to be neighbourly and friendly and helpful to others in difficulties. You see, David did better than that.
He did more than that. He looked for opportunities to do good. He didn't just wait for the opportunities to come to him. And the first question I would like to ask you this morning, as I ask myself, is, are we looking out for chances, for opportunities to help other people?
Are we constantly thinking of ways to show acts of positive kindness to others, whose need may well be greater than our own? Are we as diligent here as other men, evil men are, in plotting evil?
[4:33] It was an act of deliberate kindness. But secondly, this act of kindness on David's part was an act of fulfilled obligation.

You see, David had entered a covenant with Jonathan years before. If you turn back to 1 Samuel 20, verse 14, you will see there in 14 and 15, Jonathan and David made a covenant together.
Jonathan said in verse 14, Thou shalt not only while yet I live show the kindness of the Lord that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever.
No, not when the Lord has cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth. David made this promise to Jonathan that when his trials were over, when the victory was won, he wouldn't cut off the family of Jonathan.
He wouldn't destroy the family of Jonathan. He would do them good. And he made this commitment to his old friend years before.

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[5:51] And now the years had rolled on. Jonathan was dead. David, David, David at last has reached the occasion when he's able to fulfill that long-made former covenant.

He doesn't forget about it, as he so easily might have done. He remembers it, and he goes back to it, and he seeks to fulfill it. You and I, I wonder how diligent you and I are in fulfilling the promises that we made many years ago.
You remember that promise, perhaps, that you made years ago to your old mother when you left home? You promised that you would be in God's house every Lord's Day.
You promised that you would read a portion of the Bible every night. Your old mother's dead now. She's been dead for years. Where's that promise that you made all these years ago?
Or remember that day when you stood with romance and glamour in your eyes on your marriage day, and you took the person, the man or the woman whom you loved more than anyone else on earth to be your wedded husband or wife?
[7:13] And you made in the presence of the congregation certain obligations to be a loving and faithful and dutiful spouse. And years have passed. Are you still that loving and faithful and dutiful husband and wife that you longed to be and wanted to be and promised to be years ago?

Or you brought your child, perhaps, to this very building for the sacrament of baptism. And you promised to bring that little one up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
And you made binding promises to God in the presence of his people. For a while it was easy because that little boy or that little girl was young and they did what they were told and they had to do what they were told.
But now they're grown older and they've got a mind of their own. And it's not so easy now. And the easy way is to take the easy way out to let things slide.
Are you still as faithful to the baptismal engagements that you took upon yourselves now as you were then? Most of all the vows you made to the Lord.
[8:25] Remember that day when you first knew the Lord? And oh, you would do anything. You'd go anywhere for Jesus. Well, perhaps that was years ago.

And you still have that love and that zeal and that desire to serve the Savior as you had then. Will you still go anywhere for Jesus?
Do anything for Jesus? Give up anything for Jesus? Or has your spiritual life gotten to a rut and you find that old promise, that old commitment, just a little bit embarrassing.
An act of fulfilled obligation. And thirdly, it was an act of disinterested generosity. David had nothing to gain from this.
He had made a promise to Jonathan long ago. And here, the promise was fulfilled in the person of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.
[9:32] But we see David extending his kindness from the family of Jonathan, who was his friend, to the family of Saul, who was his enemy.

Is there not yet any of the house of Saul? Now, Jonathan's family he was committed to. But you see, he goes a step further. He went the extra mile.
He extended his invitation to anyone in the family of Saul himself. Is that the way that you and I fulfill our promises?
Do we perform the minimum of kindness that's absolutely possible in a given situation? Or is our kindness real love, like the love of David?
And do we go the extra mile when we can? And lastly, and it's on this that I want to ponder with you for a while tonight.
[10:32] It was an act of what the secret record calls the kindness of God. It was an act of God's kindness. Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?

What does this phrase mean, the kindness of God? Well, scholars have a number of, a variety of different explanations. But I think the most likely explanation is a kindness that reflects and illustrates the covenant promise, the covenant loving kindness of our God.
The word kindness here is a word that's used for grace, loving kindness. And what David does here in this act of kindness is he reflects and illustrates to us and exemplifies to us the way that God himself deals with us in kindness and in love.
So that here we have not just the story of a good man's kindness, but we have an illustration of the gospel. We have an illustration of how God himself deals in love and grace with the sinful sons of men.

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This story not only shows us our duty, but it illustrates the gospel itself. David's dealings with Mephibosheth correspond to God's dealings with us, illustrating the loving kindness and the grace of God.
[12:21] So the first lesson that I suggest that we learn of God's loving kindness from the example of David here is that the loving kindness of God, the kindness of God, reaches down.

And in the first place, the loving kindness of God reaches down to those who have nothing of themselves, nothing of their own. David was kind to Mephibosheth.
And Mephibosheth had nothing but nothing to offer back to David. What was he? Well, we don't know all that much about Mephibosheth. When we look at this chapter and the chapters which tell us more about him later on in 2 Samuel, we find we know two things about him.
We find, first of all, that he was lame in both his feet. He was unable to walk. He couldn't lead a normal life. We would say today he was disabled.
And we find that later on that he had to have a donkey, an ass to ride on. And if he was going anywhere, he had to have this ass at his door for him to go on.
[13:37] And if there was no ass, then Mephibosheth had to stay at home. He couldn't get anywhere. He was lame. He was lame. He was crippled. He was disabled. But also we notice that unlike many disabled people, he was ineffective in disposition.

He couldn't do things for himself. He had to have people looking after him. He had nothing to offer King David. To bring Mephibosheth into his family circle wouldn't make life much easier for David. It wasn't that he would be able to help David in his ruling responsibilities in any way. He would be a liability all along the line. He had nothing to offer.
And yet David invited this poor travesty of a man into his home. And it's a reminder, friends, isn't it, that we need so often to be reminded that the loving kindness of God reaches us not because of what we are or what we have, but because of what we are not and what we don't have.
Why does God love us? That's a great mystery which the Bible never seeks to explain. We get nearest to it in that wonderful verse in Deuteronomy 7, verse 7, where the Lord says to Israel, I loved you because I loved you.
[15:02] God loves us. And we can't go deeper than that. We can't penetrate the mystery of grace further than that. God loves us because he loves us.

And it's as simple and as profound as that. And Christ died because he loved us, not because we have anything to offer to him, but because he loved us.
The Son of Man came to call the righteous, not the righteous, but sinners to repent. And if you and I are Christians tonight, it's not because of something special about us, something that God looked at and was pleased with and so has blessed.
It's because we have nothing. It's because God in his love has reached down in power and in grace, and lifted us out of the darkness of our life of sin, out of the fearful pit and the miry clay, and has set our feet upon the rock that is Christ.
If we're a Christian, it's not because of what we are in ourselves, but because of what God in Christ has done for us. And secondly, if we are not a Christian, we must never, never write ourselves off as being too evil or too wicked for the grace of God.
[16:33] We can't say that we are so evil that the gospel has nothing to say to us. Because God loves us, not because of what we are or what we have, but because he is a God of love and of grace.

Therefore, no matter, my friends, how terrible your sin may be, no matter how hard your heart may have been hardened, no matter what acts of evil may burden your conscience tonight, no matter what a mess you may have made of your life, what a failure you may be, how you've wasted the years that are past, there is no sin, no sin, so terrible that it cannot be forgiven.
This is a faithful saying to the Apostle Paul, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.
The loving kindness of God reaches down to those who have nothing of their own. But secondly, the loving kindness of God reaches down to the rebel.
You see, Mephibosheth maybe had been a son of Jonathan, David's friend, but Mephibosheth but Mephibosheth had been on the wrong side because there had been a civil war and David and Saul had been fighting against each other and all the family of Saul had been on the opposite side of David.

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[18:06] And although Mephibosheth, as we'd seen, had nothing to offer of himself, yet he was a potential danger. He was a potential danger to David in the fact that he was a descendant of Saul.

He was, although he had never himself taken up arms against David, he had been on the wrong side by the fact of his, who his father and grandfather had been. And therefore, technically, he was a rebel.
And you and I, friends, aren't we in the same situation? We are rebels too. We are rebels because we have broken God's law.
We put ourselves on the wrong side. We put ourselves on the side that's fighting against God. We have not only have we broken God's law, but we've defied the one who gave the law.
We stood as it were and we've shaken our fists in the face of God. Let me ask you a question, if you doubt what I'm saying. Can you honestly sit down and look at God's law as we find it, for instance, enshrined in the Ten Commandments?
[19:21] And can we honestly say that we have not at some time or other found obedience to that law a burden and a difficulty and something which we have resented? Mephibosheth may never have taken up arms against David.

Indeed, his physical condition precluded him from doing so. But Mephibosheth had his grandfather's blood in his veins. And you and I also are rebels, long before we actually committed any sin of our own because we have flowing in our veins the blood of our first parents.
And because we are descendants of our first parents and they rebelled against God, we too are technically rebels. We too are on the wrong side.
But when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Christ died for our sins before we were even born.
God's grace is at work before we ever committed actual sin. The loving kindness of God reaches down to us in our state of rebellion against him.
[20:38] That's the second glorious truth that the story of Mephibosheth illustrates for us. And thirdly, thirdly, the loving kindness of God reaches down to the exile.

Where was Mephibosheth? He was in this place, Lodibar, which means a place without pasture. Somewhere east of the Jordan, he had gone into hiding. He was hiding there because he was on the wrong side and his side had lost the wall.
He was lying low for fear of his life, like the prodigal in a far country. He was in exile, far from home. Perhaps there's someone here tonight who's far from home, spiritually.
Oh, physically, you may be in the house of God tonight, but spiritually, you're a hundred miles away. You've been away for a long time. You're out of touch with God and you're out of touch with the teaching perhaps you received years ago when you were young.
Your parents, perhaps, were godly people and you were brought up in the church and you still come to church. God, but sin in the world have kept you away. If not from church, they've kept you away from Christ.
[21:56] And you know in your heart tonight, you're in exile. You're not at home here. You recognize that there are others who can speak of Christ in a way that you can't.

And you feel wistful and you feel lonely and you feel cut off. Well, friend, if that's your case, the loving kindness of God, the loving kindness of God and Christ reaches down to you.
You remember that lovely story of the Victorian story about the Christmas party? Here, this family of boys and girls and they're having a lovely party and the fire's blazing up the chimney and there are plenty to eat and plenty of presents.
And outside, the wind's howling and the snow's falling and it's a wintry day and this little urchin, street urchin, comes and passes the house and he sees the lights on through a chink in the curtain. He stops and he looks in the window. It's like looking into another world. He's never seen that so much food on the table in a whole year. These boys and girls are enjoying one meal.
[23:07] And he's never seen anything like it and he stands, his eyes glued to the window pane. Something which can never be his. And then suddenly, the door of the house opens and out into the street comes the lady of the house and she beckons to the wee fellow and she says to him, come in and join the fun.

Come in and join the party. And in he goes, rags and all, into the house. And if you're in exile from Christ tonight, Jesus is saying to you like that good lady, come in.

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Don't stay outside. It doesn't have to be like that. Come in. Come in. The loving kindness of Christ reaches down to the exile.
the second thing. The second thing that this second lesson that the story of Mephibosheth teaches us is that the grace of God not only reaches down but it raises up.
Look what happened to Mephibosheth. First of all, Mephibosheth finds acceptance. Verse 7, David said unto him, Fear not.
[24:24] Don't be afraid. You can imagine this man Mephibosheth hiding in Lodabar and the messengers come from the king and they say, King David wants to see you. And they put him on a donkey and they bring him to Jerusalem and they bring him into the presence of the king.

And you can imagine the fear and trembling in that poor fellow's soul as he falls down before King David. Is it, is he found out at last? Is his life to be forfeit?
What a comfort that word must have been to him. David says to him, Don't be afraid. You and I so often we are afraid when we hear the invitation of the gospel.
We hear the invitation of the gospel, Christ calling to sinners. We're frightened to close with Christ. We're frightened to come to Jesus in case we're rejected.
Our consciences are working in us and they tell us that we're guilty and we don't deserve to come. And Satan's busy and he's warning us that we've no right to come to Christ.
[25:31] We're frightened to come. for the Lord receives us with open arms. We are accepted, as Paul says, in the beloved.

The one who gave his own son did not spare his own son will not turn us away. And we can be sure that if the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for us, if the Lord Jesus went to the extent of Calvary in order to purchase our redemption, then we will not, such a costly price has been paid, we will not be turned away.
And if we come in few, we can be assured, despite our fear, of acceptance. And the assurance of our acceptance is not in us at all, but in the blood that has been shed, in the sacrifice that has been offered, in the work that has been done.
There is loving kindness of God raises us up and makes us accepted. Secondly, the loving kindness of Christ, of God, raises the sinner up and restores doors.
We see this in two ways. We see, first of all, that David gave back to Mephibosheth everything that had belonged to his father. I will surely show thee, verse 7, kindness for Jonathan, thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul, thy father.
[27:13] Everything that belonged to Saul, actually his grandfather, which had been lost as a result of the war, was given back. Timothy, and he had a fresh start.

The loving kindness of God raises us up and it restores. What, the loving kindness of God reverses all the evil effects of your sin and mine.
What we lost in Adam is restored to us in Christ. we who were ungracious and bankrupt, we who have nothing of our own to offer, we who are like Mephibosheth with nothing but nothing, are filled with a sufficiency of the grace of God.
We who were rebels on the wrong side, we are reconciled to God and we are brought onto Christ's side.
So we are now not on the losing side but on the winning side. We who are exiles in a far country, we are brought into fellowship with the living God.
[28:33] When he displays his healing power, death and the curse are known no more. In him, the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost.

Loving kindness of God raises us up by restoring us. And secondly, this restoration is seen in David providing Mephibosheth with everything he needed for his new lifestyle.
I will restore the other land of Saul, thy father. Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he provided, he gave instruction to Ziba that this poor fellow Mephibosheth who so ineffective, he was just a poor soul as we might say.
He couldn't do anything for himself. He used to be provided with everything he needed so that he would have no problems and no difficulties. He provided Mephibosheth with everything he needed for his new lifestyle.
So God provides everything, friends, that you and I might need for our new position as Christians. And if we stand on the touchline, so to speak, afraid to commit ourselves to Christ because we know our own inadequacy and we know how empty we are and how poor we are and how many

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mistakes and failures were likely to be, we can draw encouragement from this that all we require will be provided by God from the beginning right to the end.
[30:08] God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all you need, you will abound in every good work.

That's the promise of the gospel. What is it that you need? Is it faith you need? Doesn't the Bible say without faith it's impossible to please God? And how poor my faith is, how little faith it is, he will provide the faith.
What about repentance? Doesn't the Bible say we were talking this morning about repentance? Doesn't the Bible say we must repent, turn from our sin?
And how much repentance, how much sorrow for sin have I got in my soul? He is the one who gave repentance to the Gentiles. He will give us the repentance that we need. Have we confidence that we will stay the course?
He will give us all things necessary for life and guidance. He is the one who restored, just as David restored Mephibosheth to everything he required.
[31:18] So God will restore to us all that we need, give us all that we need for life and for salvation, for our pilgrimage in this world and in eternity.

Acceptance, restoration, and thirdly, this chapter tells us about adoption. That's the third thing that the loving kindness of God raises us up to.
David invited Mephibosheth into his house. Yeh shalt eat bread at my table continually. Mephibosheth, thy master's son, he said to Zeba, shall eat bread always at my table.
The Lord invites us to his heavenly table. You see, it's one thing to go out into the streets, Edinburgh or Leith, and there's a down and out, down in the gutter and you lift him up and you give him a grocery voucher and an old suit.
Perhaps you even give him the offer of a job if you are in a position to do so. That's one thing and that's very commendable. But it's quite another thing to take him into your house and sit him down at your table and treat him as a member of your family.
[32:34] That's what God does. That's what God does to you and me just as David did it to Mephibosheth. That's what God does to you and me to sinners for the sake of his son.

Paul says to the Ephesians, we are already seated with Christ in heavenly places. His love to us is so that he longs for our fellowship now and he longs especially for our fellowship in heaven.
And when God willing you come next Lord's Day to sit at this table to take in your hands the emblems of his sacred body and blood and to remember the Lord's death till he comes.
Remember that that feast, that sacramental feast is a picture is a symbol of that great feast. All the ransomed people of God will meet together in heaven as members of the family of God and the glory of it is that you don't wait till you're in heaven before you're a member of God's family.
As soon as you come to Christ as soon as you put your trust in Jesus he gives you the right the authority the power to call yourself a child of God.
[33:59] And that communion service symbolizes the family of God meeting together on earth as a family very different in every way but one in Jesus Christ.

Acceptance restoration adoption the loving kindness of God raises the sinner up. what a wonderful story what a wonderful picture of the gospel but you see that's not quite the end of the story that's the end of the story as we have in chapter 9 but if you read on in chapter 16 and chapter 19 you'll discover there's a sequel to this story.
The story of Mephibosheth ends on a less happy note because we find a coup d'etat in Jerusalem and Mephibosheth is somehow involved in this possibly engineered by Zeba.
It's difficult to work out where the rights and wrongs are but it rather looks you can go home tonight and read it for yourselves and make up your own mind but it rather looks as if Mephibosheth was framed by Zeba as we might say today.
And what happened was that David suspected Mephibosheth of being involved in the plot against him. And so this estate which Mephibosheth had been given the estate of his grandfather Saul was split between him and Zeba.
[35:33] And there's a cloud of suspicion hung over Mephibosheth to the end of his life. Well that's an illustration too of the gospel.

But it's an illustration not by comparison but by contrast. Because you see God is not David. The parallel between David showing to Mephibosheth the kindness of God and God showing the sinner

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in Christ his loving kindness is not a complete one.
What God gives to us in Christ he gives to us forever. We will never forfeit our forgiveness or be cast out of his promised presence.
We will never be accepted one day and rejected again in the future. Restored to all the blessings one day to lose them the next. Adopted into the family of God one day to find ourselves put out of the house another.
What God gives us in Christ he gives us forever. I don't know if you know the lovely story of the old Christian woman on her deathbed. and her minister came to see her because he knew this condition of her soul he was mischievously teasing her and he said to her what would happen when you die and time's coming quite near what will happen when it's all over here and you go into the presence of the Lord the Lord whom you've trusted and loved and served all these years and you find that then you're rejected that you're not allowed into heaven you're cast out into a Christless eternity how would your reaction be said the minister silly question never mind and the old woman said and I love the answer he would lose more than I would because I would lose my eternal reward but he would lose his holy and his righteous character
[37:48] God's love is a covenant love his promises to us are bound by his own character therefore you and I can be certain that in Christ we are all once in Christ we are always in Christ and if we come to the Saviour as Mephibosheth came to David what we receive from him will never be taken away from us what friends faces our response to that love we see what Mephibosheth did he bowed himself down in reverence and in awe and in obeisance before the king let's just do that you and I let's bow ourselves down before God in worship and in faith and lay hold in faith upon that love which has held out to us the love that reaches down and that raises up and be drawn by it to enjoy all these wonderful blessings that our Lord has purchased for his people let us pray

Lord our God we give thanks to thee for that love that love which we cannot understand or explain that love which is sheer mystery that reaches down to us in our sin that speaks to us in our need and gives us the only hope which we have in this world O give us hearts Lord we pray to respond in faith to lay hold upon Christ to receive from him these blessings that we have seen illustrated for us in this chapter may we not call back from Christ may we not reject the overtures of grace but may we make it our business this night and this week and in this forthcoming communion season to discover for the first time or to discover afresh all the glories and blessings of the gospel and to find them in our own experience and in our own life for the sake of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ we ask it Amen

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