Mephibosheth

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Calum Matheson

[0:00] ...together in the second book of Samuel on chapter 9 and we can take our text from verse 3.

Second Samuel chapter 9 from verse 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?
And Seba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son which is laid on his feet. And so on.
I think it's agreed by nearly everyone who would comment on this chapter.
That this is one of the loveliest acts in the whole life of David the king.
[1:12] It's a scene regolent of the wonder of the love of God and it's full of instruction for us.

And I think the main avenue of instruction for us in this story is that David is here shadowing forth his greater son.
He's here showing us something of the grace of God in the gospel.
And I believe that David sitting on the throne and showing mercy to this lame son of Jonathan.
It's something like the way in which God himself shows mercy to sinners like you and I.
[2:20] And therefore I've got no difficulty in teaching this passage as a foreshadowing of the gospel of free grace.

And I would like to look at it today from five different angles. I would like us first of all to look at the pathos of this whole transaction.
Then secondly the motive by which David acted. Thirdly the object to whom David showed kindness.
Thirdly David's dealing with Mephibosheth because we read that he sent and he pitched him from Lodibah.
And then fifthly and finally Mephibosheth meeting with David. And all of this is illustrated for us of the way in which God deals with sinners such as you and I in Jesus Christ.
[3:42] Now first of all we're going to look at the pathos of this whole situation. The chapter begins David said, is there yet any that is left in the house of Saul?

What a strange question for David to ask about the family, about the house of the man who was his chief antagonist.
In God's purposes for him in going to the throne of Israel. There was a day when David need not have asked, is there any left of the house of Saul?
But you see the pathos of this situation lies in the fact that God's judgment had moved out into the house of Saul.
Little did Saul and his family expected when they made David the body of their criticism. And when they made him the object of their many, many attacks.
[4:55] And particularly this was true of Saul himself. Little would it be said that a day would come within a generation when David the king would be asking, is there yet any of the house of Saul to whom I might show kindness?

Little would you expect it. But oh my friends, the judgment of Almighty God is a terrible thing in the life of anyone, or in any family, or in any household, or in any nation.
The judgment of Almighty God, it reduces the great to ashes. My friends, what a strange question. Is there yet any? And yet it seems to me that here you have David in all the pathetic picture of the health of Saul and the judgments of God.
And he's moving out in kindness to this pure fallen household. Do you notice what David does here?
[6:07] David, in the midst of all the pathos of this situation, takes the initiative in showing kindness to the house of Saul.

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Not the way it is with God. You know my friends, our houses are the house of fallen man in a pathetic condition. Because of our sins, we've fallen away from God.
We're strangers to his grace. And yet the wonder of that grace is surely that God takes the initiative. And God who sits on the throne moves out in loving kindness to a generation and to a race that is totally fallen from him.
Oh my friends, shouldn't we today, before we even enter into the study of this passage, shouldn't we magnify the grace of God?
Shouldn't we really stand back in wonder and say, Oh the wonder of God's grace that he should know to take the initiative in the experience of fallen mankind.
[7:24] I think that should be one of the constraints under which we today view this whole passage. And God takes the initiative with man in that way and says, Is there any to whom I might show kindness?

For Jesus' sake. For Jesus' sake. For Jesus' sake. Now we're going to look briefly now at the object of David's quest.
And I want you to notice that Mephibosheth is not one who remembered David in the day of his own trouble.
Mephibosheth didn't have any claim to the love of David, to the love of the king. Because David's day of trouble had come and gone.
And Mephibosheth had been quite forgetful of David in the time of his trouble. In fact, I think we can go so far as to say that this man Mephibosheth didn't deserve it in any way deserve the love that David showed to him.
[8:47] He didn't deserve it in any way. He hadn't done anything to earn it. His character didn't presuppose it. Nothing at all had he done to earn the grace that David showed to him.

And isn't that true of every object of the love of God? Everyone on whom the love of God lies. It's not because they're disturbing.
It's not because they've done anything good. In fact, the very opposite, they've turned away from God every one of us. We have fallen by our iniquity.
And yet God in his grace shows mercy on whom he will show mercy. Why? Why? Well, you know my friend, when you come to ask the question, why does God show mercy to sinners?
You've got to stop here. Because he is who he is. It's not because of anything in them. It's because he is who he is.
[10:01] That's the only reason that you'll ever find for God showing mercy to sinners. Because he finds the reason in himself.

It's because he is motivated by love. God is who he is. You ask me today, what attribute is God preeminently lies behind the atoning work of Christ?
God is who he is. And I'm sure there would be in this congregation various answers. But do you know, my friend, there's only one thing that you can say.
God is who he is. The preeminent attribute that lies behind the atoning work of Christ is the love of God. God who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all.
And we're going to look now at the motivating powers of that love. And I'm reminded, as I do, of a text in the New Testament.
[11:11] Ephesians chapter 4 and at verse 32, I think. This is what we're told there by the apostles. Even as God, for Christ's sake, forgive you.

Forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. And if you're looking, my friend, today for the motivating power of this affection, David makes it quite obvious.
He says, is there any of the house of Saul to whom I might show the kindness of God? For Jonathan's sake, for Jonathan's sake, for the sake of Jonathan.
David would never forget the love of Jonathan. David couldn't forget the love of Jonathan. Do you remember his lament at the time of the rout at Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan had been killed?
And then you have what's called the son of the bow. And David is lamenting for Saul and Jonathan. And he's saying they were beautiful in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.
[12:37] And then he says, oh Jonathan, thy love to me was wonderful. So I'm clapping the love of women. David, you see, he was swallowed up in the love of this friend of his, Jonathan, to the extent that he could never forget him.

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But you see, the kindness which David wanted to show to one of the house of Saul here, he called it the kindness of God.
The kindness of God. And why does he call this kindness? The kindness of God. Well, let me kind of explain to you why.
Because, you see, as far as David was concerned, the kindness that he wanted to show to the house of Saul was a kindness, first of all, patterned on God's kindness.
There was no one left in the house of Saul. David was absolutely certain of that. There was no one left in the house of Saul who deserved his kindness.
[13:52] So, if he was going to show kindness to the house of Saul, he was showing the kindness of God. A kindness patterned on God's own loving kindness in the Gospel.

But you see also here, it was the kindness of God because, basically, the kindness that David was going to show to the house of Saul, was nothing other than a covenant kindness.
It was a covenant kindness. You see, way back in 1 Samuel, David had entered into a covenant with Jonathan. And one of the basis of this covenant was that David would never forget Jonathan. He was knit together with Jonathan as his own soul. And you cannot forget one with whom you're knit together in covenant as your own soul.
Can you? The large people here know that there are people in the world with whom they're knit together in the covenant. And they couldn't forget them.
[15:10] They've got to go on their knees for them. They've got to remember them. They've got to bear them in their spirits day by day. And that's the way it was with this man, David.

He had entered into a covenant with Jonathan. And the covenant extended to all the house of Jonathan. Is there yet any of the house of Saul to whom I might show the kindness of God?
Why does he call that covenant love the kindness of God? Because, you see, it was the promise, it was the covenant of which God himself had been the witness between David and Jonathan.
God was the witness of that covenant. And as far as David was concerned, there was nothing in the world more important than God was the witness of that covenant.
And it was the kindness of God because it was the kindness that God had witnessed in the covenant that he made with Jonathan.
[16:16] And it was the promise of God. And he said, Is there any of the house of Saul to whom I might show covenant kindness?

Now just think of what Mephibosheth was going to receive from David for a moment. He was going to receive the fruit of a covenant into which David had entered before Mephibosheth was ever born.
Isn't that lovely? Isn't that a lovely foreshadowing of the gospel of free grace? He was going to receive the fruit of a covenant into which David and his father Jonathan had entered before he was ever born.
And you know, my friend, if God shows you the kindness of God, if the kindness of God is ever made known to you, it will be made known on the basis of a covenant into which engagements were made before he was ever born.
Oh, the covenant of grace is an eternal covenant. And it's on the basis of the covenant of grace that you will receive the kindness of God.
[17:44] But I want now to look at the object of this kindness, Mephibosheth. You know, it seems to me almost as an English speaker, that the name Mephibosheth isn't a very pleasant name, is it?

It doesn't sound a nice name. But in the original language, that's exactly the case. It's not a nice thing. It's not a nice name, this name Mephibosheth.
In fact, you know as well as I do that names means a great deal to the Hebrews, to the Jewish people, to the Israelites.
And this name Mephibosheth meant a shameful thing. That's what he was named, that's what he was called at his baptism, a shameful thing, Mephibosheth.
And really, you know, that's again important, I think, in realizing the kindness that was shown to this one, who had at his name, who had at his name, a shameful thing.
[19:00] And also, this object of David's kindness, Mephibosheth, not only has the name Mephibosheth a shameful thing, but this object of David's kindness had from the day of David's accession to the throne been a fugitive from David.

Do you remember the story? It's in 2 Kings 4, and there you have it, 2 Samuel 4, there you have it that the nursemaid of Mephibosheth took him.

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When David acceded to the throne, she took him and she fled with him. Why did she flee? Because at one of the house of Saul, he was a fugitive from David.
You know, my friends, that's the way it is, with all the shameful ones that become the objects of God's kindness. Not only do they have the name, a shameful thing, sinner, but all of them have been fugitives from David's greater son.
All of them have been fugitives from God. They've run away with their first father, Adam, and they've said, I will not have paid because I was naked.
[20:24] And what did I do? I hid myself among the trees of the garden. Sinners, where are you hiding today?

Tell me, where are you hiding today from God? Because all of us by nature are fugitives.
And then something else about this man, Mephibosheth, he was a cripple. He was laying on both his feet. What does that tell you about him?
It tells you about the impotence of this man in everything. He was absolutely impotent. He was lame on both his feet.
He was totally crippled. You know, it's almost as if there had a picture being painted here of one who couldn't come to Jerusalem, supposing he wanted to.
[21:29] And did you ever notice in the story of Mephibosheth's life, how his lameness came about? He was lame because he fled, or as his nursemaid fled with him in his inner arms, he fell to the ground, a little infant.

He fell to the ground and both his feet were damaged. And he was lame on both his feet. That's how. He was a cripple as a result of a fall.
That's the way his man, Mephibosheth, was a cripple. He was cripple as a result of a fall. And where did he live? This object of David's pity and David's kindness for Jonathan's sake, where was he?
You could search and scour the streets of Jerusalem, but you wouldn't find Mephibosheth, one of the south house of Saul. This fugitive had gone as far away as possible.
And he was found in the house of Mahur, the son of Amiel, in a place called Lodibar. Do you ever make inquiry as to what Lodibar means?
[22:45] Lodibar means a place of no pasture. That's what the word means, a place of no pasture. Let's pick up on the story of the prodigal son.

Where was he? He was in the far country, and a famine, a drought came. A famine came, and he would pay to have filled him his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.
Where was this boy, this man, Mephibosheth, when David's kindness reached him? He was living where every fallen son of Adam lives.
He was living in a place of no pasture. My dear unconverted friend, do you realize where you've been living all your life? You've been living in a place that's got the name, a place of no pasture.
A place that's got nothing for you. Nothing to meet the needs of your soul. Nothing to meet your need at a sinner. Are you living there, my friend, today, in the place of no pasture?
[24:00] Is that where you've taken up, pitched your tent? Is that where you've decided to live? Where you would pain fill your belly with a husk. Is that the swine to eat?

I feel sorry for the Mephibosheth in this congregation, the shameful things in this congregation, who have chosen to live in a land of no pasture.
Oh, I plead with you, unconverted, unconverted souls, are you willing to live your life? Are you willing to spend your eternity in a place of no pasture?
But, oh, let's move on to see David's dealings with Mephibosheth. This old servant of the house of Saul called Seba, he told David, there is one son of Jonathan, lame on both his legs.
What did David do? Listen in verse 5. Oh, I think that's beautiful.
[25:18] He sent and hedged him. Isn't that lovely? Isn't it wonderful, you know, that when you were in the far country, the Lord sent and hedged you out of Lodibar?

The Lord sent and hedged you. Here was this man in all his impotence, in his inability, in his crippled condition. He was there in Lodibar.
And try as he would, it would have taken him all his life to reach Jerusalem. But he wouldn't have reached because he was unable. He was filled with inability.
But King David sent and hedged him. Oh, the love of Christ. He sent and hedged him. And look at what it cost him to send and hedged sinners from the place of no pasture.

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He sent and hedged him from the house of Mather, the son of Amiel in Lodibar. Where did he take him? He took him to Jerusalem. He took him to the place that's called the foundation of peace.
[26:34] That's where he took him. He took him from the place of no pasture. And he placed him in the foundation of peace. My dear unconverted friend, wouldn't it be lovely today if you yourself were brought from the place of no pasture to sit at the king's table in the foundation of peace.

That's what we wish for you. That's what we long to see in your lives, unconverted souls. We long to see you sitting at the king's table in the foundation of peace.
But how can it be done? How can we see that great miracle happening? Only if the king does what David did.
He sent and he hedged him. My friend, there's only one thing will bring your soul into real communion with God.
And it's this. An act of sovereign mercy on the part of Christ. That's all. Do you realize how dependent you are today on the mercy of God?
[27:49] He must send and fetch you. Or you'll never come to Jerusalem. You'll never be in the new Jerusalem. You'll never be in the kingdom of God until King Jesus sends and fetches you.

But the wonder of it is this. That God uses means in the world to send and fetch sinners and bring them to the foundation of peace.
He does. Now I want us to look at Mephibosheth meeting David. This is my last section in the sermon today.
And the first thing you notice is this. When he came to David, he fell on his face and did reverence. Oh, my friend, isn't it wonderful that the future did come to the place where they followed that face to do reverence.
Isn't it lovely that future did come to the point where they fall before King Jesus. Where they bow their face to the ground and where they are humbled before God.
[29:07] Do you know this? Nobody came, ever came spiritually to the foundation of peace. But someone that was humbled in evangelical humiliation.

What is evangelical humiliation? The old divines of Scotland, John Cahoon and others, they used to call evangelical humiliation.
They used to call the doctrine of repentance evangelical humiliation. No one ever came to King Jesus but by the path of repentance. And the path of repentance goes through the valley of humiliation, my friends.
And it goes through the place where you fall at the feet of Jesus. And where you give him the praise and the glory that is due to his name.
Have you fallen there, my friends? Have you come to the feet of Jesus? He came and he fell on his face and he did reverence. He was an affidavit place and an affidavit costume.
[30:09] He fell at Jesus' feet. Sinner, do you know something today? That's what keeps you away. Because there's a proud heart beating within you that's saying, I won't submit.

I won't do reverence. I'd prepare to continue a fugitive from King Jesus. Or is that true this morning? That you'd prepare to continue as a fugitive from King Jesus. You'd prepare to stay away from Christ. You'd prepare that.
There's only one thing that keeps you back. And it's this unwillingness to tread the path that leads to peace.
He bowed himself. And he fell on his face and he did reverence. And then David said, Mephibosheth. David said, Mephibosheth.
[31:17] There are three things. When he came to David, David reminded him of what he was. And when sinners come to Christ, very often you'll find that that's the way it is.

Christ will remind these sinners what they are. Shameful thing, sinner. But I think there's something else in the uttering of his name by King David here.
Mephibosheth. God deals with that sinner in the most personal way possible.
And he calls you by your name. And he calls you by your name. And he shows you that you mean to him what you are. Mephibosheth.
He calls you by your name. Let me ask you, my friend. Have you heard him call your name? Has he spoken to you in a personal way?
[32:26] And as he said to you, Mephibosheth. You know this word, it's an evocative case. And it comes out beautifully in our Gaelic language. It's almost as if the pathos of David's heart, as he

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sees this returning son of Jonathan coming, is moved.

And he says, O Mephibosheth. Do you know, my friends, the Bible tells me one really, really precious thing about God.
And this is what it says. It says that there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. Joy in the presence.
Do you know, I think there's joy in David's heart as he sees Mephibosheth returning to Jerusalem. As he sees them there bowed at his feet. There's joy in David's heart.
What does it mean to say there is joy in the presence of the angels of God? Oh well you see, it means that the church in heaven are rejoicing.
[33:38] What kind of joy does the church in heaven have? The only joy that the church in heaven has is the same joy, is the same joy as the church on earth has.

It's joy that flows to us through a mediator. Everything that heaven experiences will be through the mediator. Through the mediation of Christ.
And you know why there's joy in heaven over one sinner that repents? Do you know why there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents?
Because there's joy in the heart of the Trinity over a repenting sinner. Joy in the heart of God in heaven over one sinner that repents.
My friend isn't that lovely. Oh, Mephibosheth. The joy that was in the heart of David is redolent of the joy that's in the heart of God as he sees sinners coming back to Christ.
[34:43] And David said, Mephibosheth, I know you. I know all about you. Mephibosheth, he uses his name just to show what he means to.

And then he says these words, fear not. David said, fear not.
And that lovely. I'm sure that that young man's heart was full of fear coming to Jerusalem when David sent and said to him.
Do you think anyone ever came to Christ without their heart being full of fear? I don't think so. I think when people came back to God in the covenant of grace, they were all full of fear.
And they were saying, will he take? Will he accept me? Will he throw me out? If he takes me, will I stand the test of time? Will I be able to continue in the life of grace?
[35:46] And there was so much in that word, Mephibosheth. And yet, it was followed quickly by the words, fear not. My dear friend, you're here today.

And in your heart, there's a secret longing to come back to God in Christ. In your heart, you want desperately to know the Lord. But you're full of fear.
And you know, my Savior tells me today that he's saying to you, fear not. Fear not. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid if you're coming to him. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to come. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. And then, Mephibosheth opens the bag and he lets the cat out of the bag of the twin.
The whole basis of his fears. What worth it? Why shouldest thou look on such a dead dog as I am? You see, that's a statement filled with a sense of his own unworthiness.
[36:57] Why shouldest thou look on such a dead dog as I am? Why? Do you remember when Ruth came to Boaz?

She said, Why shouldest thou take knowledge of me? Seeing I am but a stranger. I wonder if anyone ever came back to God without this question mark in their mind.
Why? Why me? Why me? I think it's in the heart of men and women in this congregation today. They see some of you in the congregation here and you're so much better than them.
And you're so much more acceptable human beings than they've been. And yet the grace of God has touched their lives and they're saying, Why me?
Why me? And do you know, my friend, the day you lose the wonder of that question in your life is the day when you've got to start worrying. The day when you cease to say, Why me?
[38:06] A dead dog like me. Why me? Me so unclean. I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me.

A sinner. Condemned. Uncleaned. Do you have that sense of amazement this morning in your heart as you look back on God's grace in bringing you from the place of no pasture to the foundation of peace?
Why me? Why me? And then look finally at the portion that David gave to Mephibosheth.

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First of all, he spared his life. Mephibosheth must have had many a question when he thought of his fugitive days as he was returning, being fetched back to David.
Will he have mercy on me at all? Will he take me? Will he take me? Do you ever ask that in your thoughts of returning to God?
[39:19] Will he accept me? David spared his life. Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake.

And then, there was an inheritance. I will restore to thee all the land of Saul. And then there was a provision. He sent Seba and his sons and his servants to be the servants of Mephibosheth.
And then there was this at last. But as for you, Mephibosheth, you will sit and eat continually forever at the king's table in Jerusalem.
Just think of that poor Mephibosheth, that shameful thing, with his crippled legs and everything. The source of his shame in his crippled legs.
And David says, as for you, you'll always have a place at the king's table. And you know something about this man, Mephibosheth, the place to which David brought him, it was what would forever cover these poor crippled legs.
[40:41] He was still a cripple. He was still lame. In many respects, he was still a shameful thing. But David brought him to a place that would cover all of his shamefulness and all of his crippleness and all of his lameness.

The table covered. The table covered. And isn't it true this day to day that you'll come to Christ as a sinner.
You can't come in any other way. And your sins will still be with you while you're on this earth. But the table of the gospel covers the sinfulness of God's people as they sit there continually and have their portion at the king's table.
Oh, you know, my friend, that's what I long for you today as your minister. I long that we together will be seated around the king's table in Jerusalem in the foundation of peace where forever the table of the gospel will cover our imperfections and our sinfulness.
May God bless his word. Let's pray. Oh, gracious God, there are days in our lives when we feel that we've reached the table.
[42:26] There are days in our lives when we feel that we're on the threshold. And who knows but this morning there's some poor soul in this gathering who's in Lodibar in the place of no pasture but the king has sent to fetch them.

Oh, Lord, fetch them with the gospel this morning and bring them to the table where they will sit forever at the foundation of peace.
Lord, have mercy on all of our homes all of our families. We need thee. We're living in a fragile world and in a changing world.
We're living we're living on the edge living on the edge so close to eternity and yet, Lord, so careless so indifferent so often to the things of God.
Oh, wilt thou not bring us in? Bring us in where the fear of the gospel is spread for thy people and all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.

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