

# The Kindness of the King

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Scripture: 2 Samuel 9

*And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.*

—2 Samuel 9:3

In the passage that we read, we see King David serving as a type of King Jesus. Let's consider these rich and glorious parallels from this history of David's interaction with Mephibosheth and Christ's interactions with needy sinners. Our theme is "The Kindness of the King": 1) It reveals his tender heart; 2) It reveals his true subjects; 3) It reveals his lavish provision.

## **The King's Tender Heart**

The kindness of the King *reveals his tender heart*. In 2 Samuel 7:1 we read that David had rest from all his enemies. And now as he sits upon his throne, he is able to give attention to matters other than warfare. And what is it that operates behind the tender heart of King David?

First of all, there is *commitment*. He has committed himself to show kindness to the house of Saul. As he sits upon his throne he thinks about his covenant made with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:14–16a, "And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me 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 hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David.” It is because of this covenant that David now remembers the promise made. He has committed himself to do this and not to do it would mean that he would break his promise to Jonathan.

And how does this reveal the tender heart of God our King? Is it also not in his commitment to us? He covenanted with Christ in eternity to show kindness to His people. He remembers His covenant to eternity. This kindness is vividly displayed for us in the cross of Jesus Christ, where the Lord declares His commitment to sinners such as we are. The Lord has shown this same commitment to David in 2 Samuel 7. He negotiates with David out of sheer and sovereign grace, and He does the same in the preaching of the gospel.

Second, there is *kindness*. David asks, “Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (v. 1). In verse 3, David repeats the question. He is eager to show kindness, “Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?” Notice how David describes this kindness. It is not just kindness that wells up in his heart. No, it is kindness that is rooted in God’s kindness to him. The word “kindness” actually means covenant faithfulness. David is asking whether he can demonstrate the covenant faithfulness of God to any of Saul’s house. This is an astounding question because kings in the ancient Near East would never spare the descendants of a dynasty that had fallen for fear of reprisal and rebellion. They would all be annihilated, but here David asks if he might show covenant faithfulness

to the house of Saul for Jonathan's sake! He seeks to show kindness to an enemy dynasty!

And this question comes to us as well. The Lord calls to sinners through the gospel: "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? Is there yet any that is left of My enemy's house that I may show him kindness for the sake of Christ?" Remember the house of Saul was a house marked by disobedience, a house that in all respects should have been annihilated. Is that not true of us? We deserve to die because of our rebellion. And yet we hear this gospel question, "Is there yet any left?" Sin is unkind. People can be unkind. The devil is unkind, but the Lord offers His kindness, His covenant faithfulness for sinners for the sake of Christ. David is doing this for the sake of Jonathan. As he asked this question, no doubt the love for Jonathan continued strongly even after his death, and as David asked this question he saw only Jonathan. That is how God is favorable towards sinners. He shows kindness for the sake of Christ. He sees Christ and He shows kindness for the sake of His beloved Son! Are there yet any—even those who deserve to be annihilated—to whom I can show kindness for Christ's sake?

Thirdly, there is the *discovery*, or the answer to David's questions. In response to the first question, the servants of David discover Ziba, a man who had served Saul. Having found Ziba, David aims the question at him and Ziba responds in verse 3, "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet." It is not Mephibosheth who discovers David and pleads for mercy and kindness, but it is David who discovers Mephibosheth. "And where is he?" asks David. Ziba answers, "Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar." And what is significant about that? Well, you probably know the

history of Mephibosheth. He was forced to flee when David ascended the throne, and so he is in exile, in hiding. His name means “scatterer of shame.” He is in Lodebar, a city whose name means “nothing.” He does not have much going for him, does he?

But aren't we so much like Mephibosheth in a spiritual way? We too, are in exile because of sin. We have been banished from Paradise, from the continual presence of God, but now God enquires of us where we are: “Where are you?” Perhaps you have never gone to the Lord Jesus before and you tremble at the thought because you fear doing it unworthily, but the Lord is seeking you out: “Where are you?” Perhaps you've gone before but tremble because of your sins, “Where are you?” The Lord knows where we are. We are in our own Lodebar of sin and banishment. He knows the shame and guilt you carry. And that is where God finds sinners. He knows the week that you've had—the struggles, the temptations, the sins—and that's where He finds us. What a blessing it is to be found by King Jesus in such a state! He does not require more or less. He is a sovereign, gracious, wise, and loving King and He tenderly yet firmly draws sinners out of darkness, shame, and even death, into His presence.

This powerful and drawing kindness of Christ is what we see reflected in the heart of King David as he issues his summons to Mephibosheth. In verse 5 we read, “Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.” The summons that Mephibosheth hears from the mouths of David's servants sets him free and will restore him again because of the kindness of the king.

We too, receive the summons of our King. We are called from Lodebar, from the nothing of sin. The Lord

not only finds us there, but summons us from our hiding, from our exile. What gracious words these are: “Then king David sent, and fetched him.” That is what the Lord does for sinners. He sends His Son and He fetches us from the darkness of banishment. He summons us into His glorious presence so that we might be recipients of His kindness. This leads us to confess,

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking  
me; It was not I that found, O Savior true;  
No, I was found, was found of thee.

### **The King’s True Subjects**

The kindness of the King *reveals his true subjects*. The kindness of King David led him to search for any of the house of Saul. It did not matter that Ziba told him that Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet. “Is there yet *any?*” He is looking for subjects upon whom to bestow kindness, regardless of their condition.

The kindness of the king is lavished upon an impotent man. You say, “That’s easy. Mephibosheth was lame and hardly posed a threat to King David, so it was easy for David to show kindness to Mephibosheth.” That makes it all the more difficult. It would have been very easy for David to ignore Mephibosheth, don’t you think? Who would show kindness to a cripple? Better to leave him than love him. But that is not what David does. He shows kindness to an impotent man. This man has nothing to offer David in return. He is lame. He can’t work. He will only be presuming on the king’s kindness. A most unworthy recipient, and yet David summons this lame man.

To whom does God seek to show kindness here? I pray the spiritual parallel is obvious. We too, are much like

Mephibosheth in our hearts. We are impotent. We are spiritually lame, unable to move, powerless to lift a finger for our salvation, and God comes in order to show kindness to sinners for the sake of His Son. It is easier for God to leave us in Lodebar, in our self-imposed exile, but He does not do that. He comes and summons us and reveals His tender heart of kindness for sinners. In David's actions we see Mephibosheth's impotency come to light in its starkest reality. This man can do nothing and can only hope upon the good pleasure of the king. So too, for us, God's action and kindness bring to light our utter impotency and our utter dependence upon the mercy and kindness of God. Are we coming with such a disposition to Christ? God delights to show mercy to unworthy recipients: "Is there yet any of the house of Saul?" Come from Lodebar my friends, and see the heart of God in Christ, a heart of mercy and kindness for impotent sinners! Are there sons of Jonathan, who are lame in your feet? Even after the grace we receive, this is still our condition. When Mephibosheth dined at the king's table, our passage ends with these words in verse 13, "And was lame on both his feet." What mercy and grace are displayed here for impotent sinners! These are the true recipients of the King's kindness. He bids the helpless, the weak, the impotent to come into His presence and enjoy His fellowship!

Furthermore, David's kindness reveals a worshipping subject. We read in verse 6 that when Mephibosheth appears in the presence of David, he falls on his face and does reverence. You can almost imagine the scene. A man enters the royal court, on crutches or being carried, and he awkwardly falls before the king. There is nothing dignified in the actions of this cripple, but his posture tells us that he honors the king. In verse 8, he bows again. He fears the king and he honors him. He does not

presume upon the kindness of the king. He knows he deserves to be a dead man.

Friends, do we know our place before the Lord? Do we do reverence before the LORD? Do we recognize that what we rightfully deserve is death because of rebellion and sin, but that the Lord summons us into His glorious presence and we are in that presence even now, that heaven is opened as it were as we worship God? What is the posture of crippled sinners to be before our gracious and merciful King? Let us fall on our faces and reverence the Lord, who is worthy of all our praises. The Lord is concerned about our hearts. Even if we hobble into the presence of the King, does the kindness of the King reveal in us a heart of reverence and worship?

The king's kindness also reveals an obedient subject. In verse 6b, David calls out, "Mephibosheth." The king has intimate knowledge of this man lying in a heap before him. What fear must have struck Mephibosheth as David called out his name! The king is seated on his majestic throne and the name of this impotent man echoes through the royal chambers with authority. And how does Mephibosheth answer? "Behold, thy servant!" He takes a posture of obedience. He is ready to do what the king requires. He is at the mercy of the king.

Is that how you approach the Lord? The Lord calls out personally through the gospel, "Mephibosheth." Perhaps you fear and tremble at the sound of the Lord's voice as He summons you from His throne and into His presence. This is not a trifling matter. It is the voice of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Will you show an obedient heart like Mephibosheth? Will you be obedient to the command of our King when He calls you personally? Will you say, "Behold, thy servant"?

The king's kindness also reveals a humble subject. The kindness of King David does not just leave Mephibosheth quivering and quaking in fear. No, David speaks words of unbelievable kindness in verse 7: "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." Imagine the impact of these words! These words are almost unbelievable. They are overwhelming. Here is a man expecting to die, expecting to be hauled away to the executioner, and he hears this: "Fear not." He hears this: "*Surely* you will receive kindness, restoration, fellowship." This is too much for Mephibosheth, and in verse 8, he bows himself and says, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Mephibosheth bows in abject humility. He feels his utter unworthiness in these moments. Literally he says, "What is your servant that you should turn towards a dead dog like me?" David was supposed to turn away his favor from Mephibosheth, but he turns it towards this lame man, who by all customs and traditions should have been annihilated. He sees himself as a dead dog, despised and unfit for the kindness of the king.

This displays for us the wonder of grace and our response to it. When God speaks to us in this way in His Son, when He desires to have dealings with you, and when He finds you in your impotency and shame, it is so overwhelming, it is so contrary to our expectations. We deserve to die, and yet King Jesus removes the obstacle of fear. We have nothing to bring, but Jesus says, "I will restore what sin has destroyed and ruptured." We have nothing to plead, but God says, "I will show kindness for the sake of my Son." We now have something to plead, the Name of Christ. We are lonely, weak, and



malnourished without God, and God says, “You will eat at my table continually.” Lord, what is Thy servant that Thou shouldest turn towards a dead dog like me? We feel despised and unworthy, much like Peter in Luke 5:8, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord.” Do we display this abject humility in the face of such grace and kindness? This too, is the kindness of God! It is the sheer goodness of God that leads sinners to repentance and humility.

### **The King’s Lavish Provision**

The kindness of the King *reveals his lavish provision*. But the king’s kindness did not change upon the feelings of Mephibosheth. These feelings only demonstrated all the more his need of the kindness of the king. That is true of us as well. Our feelings and our unworthiness do not change the lavish provision of King Jesus for our souls. And that is what we see reflected in David’s actions towards Mephibosheth. King David in his kindness lavishes all kinds of provision upon Mephibosheth.

First of all, Mephibosheth receives the restoration of his inheritance. In verse 7 David says, “I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father.” In verse 9, he tells Ziba what he has done for Mephibosheth, “I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. In verse 10, part of that inheritance includes Ziba and his household as servants to Mephibosheth: “Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits.... Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.” This was a sizable inheritance, to be managed by so many! And then in verse 12 this aspect of servants is reinforced: “And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.” David withholds nothing. He gives the

inheritance, but he also gives those to minister to Mephibosheth so that he might enjoy this inheritance.

What are the spiritual parallels? Does the Lord not lavish upon His adopted children a glorious inheritance? Mephibosheth had no right to this inheritance that David gave him, neither do we have a right to the inheritance that is stored up in Christ, but we receive it out of grace alone! What was lost because of the fall of Adam in Paradise is restored to us in Christ. These are the words of God to us in the gospel, "I will restore thee *all* the land of Saul thy father." He gave His Son to execute His will. He gives His Spirit as a down payment for what is to come. He gives His servants to bring in the fruit so that we might enjoy the inheritance we have in Christ. We are restored to holiness, righteousness, and our eternal reward of grace stored up in heaven for us. We now have the right to this inheritance, not because of who we are, but because Christ has secured this inheritance for us, and He has the power and the willingness and authority to confer that inheritance. This is the kindness of the King.

Second, David treats Mephibosheth as one of his own sons. Imagine Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom, and later Solomon, all the rest of the sons and daughters of David, all accomplished princes and princesses enjoying the privileges of being the king's sons and daughters, all sitting around the table. In hobbles Mephibosheth on his crutches, perhaps a servant assisting him, and he sits down at the king's table. Not the servants' table, but at the king's table as a son! In verse 11, we read these words, "As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons." We are inclined to focus on the fact that Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, but he did so as one of the king's sons. What a turn of events

for Mephibosheth! It is such a contrast from where he had been so recently. The king could well have killed him and now he is treated as one of the king's sons, adopted into the family of the king! This scatterer of shame from the city of nothing is exalted to the position of the king's son! Orphaned from the family of Saul, Mephibosheth is now treated as David's son! What grace and kindness are displayed here! What lavish provision!

What a picture of the lavish provision that you have in Christ your King, if you are indeed one of His true subjects! He exalts transformed sinners to the position of sons of the King. We are adopted into the King's family. We are called from time to time to the table of King Jesus and he bids us come not as servants but as sons. We enjoy all the privileges of adoption. We who are like Mephibosheth, lame and impotent, full of shame and from the city of nothing, of vanity, are bidden to come as sons to the King's table. By nature, we who are sons of Adam and orphaned from the family of God, are by grace again adopted into the family of God for the sake of our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ! Mephibosheth dined with sons and daughters who were born into the royal family. None of us is born into the royal family by nature, but we are adopted into the family of God by grace. And that is how we are invited to come now. Not as servants, but as sons. "How deep the Father's love for us...to make a wretch His treasure!" This is the kindness of the King.

Finally, Mephibosheth is lavished with strength and fellowship at the king's table. It is after all the king's table. In verse 10 we read, "But Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table." In verse 13, "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table." This was not simply a one-time meal, a passing dream for Mephibosheth. He

was guaranteed a perpetual place at the table of the king so long as he lived. He would receive strength, sustenance and fellowship at the king's table with the king himself. He receives royal bounty and royal fellowship. Who could ask for more?

And what a spiritual parallel with the Lord's Supper! We can call it the King's table, where He delights to sit down with His guests and feed them with royal bounty, with Himself, and strengthens them and fellowships and communes with them and assures them that this is no passing dream, no illusion, but they are guaranteed a perpetual place at His Table, both now and into eternity: "We will eat at the king's table continually." For now, we enjoy the spiritual presence of Christ at the table, but there will be a day where we shall see him face to face and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Meditate on this the next time that communion is celebrated. This is the kindness of the King.

And how does Mephibosheth respond? We do not read a direct response to the kindness of King David, but we do read that Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem and dined at the King's table. He fellowshipped with King David as a son. But there is another marker in the text that indicates where Mephibosheth's heart was in regard to God's provision for him. In verse 12 we read this: "And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha." Presumably, Mephibosheth had this son after he was welcomed into the king's family. The name of his young son stands as a testimony for the kindness of God received by Mephibosheth because Micha means, "Who is like unto our God?" Indeed, who is like our God that lavishes this kindness upon impotent and needy sinners, transforming them into sons. Mephibosheth's life was full of the fear of God. Is yours, dear believer?

Finally, one more practical gospel application that flows from this beautiful and profound narrative. Someone once called this history, “Kingdom Policy for the Disabled.” If this is how David dealt with Mephibosheth and how Christ has dealt with you, then this is a kingdom policy for His people to follow too. Is there yet someone to whom you can show God’s kindness, whether spiritually or physically disabled, and yet in the city of nothing, waiting to be restored through God’s kindness? Will you carry out this kingdom policy? David was doing this because of what God had done for him. Will we do the same for the sake of our Savior? May we ever live out of the kindness of our King and show that kindness to others. Amen.

