



# Grace

## 1 Samuel 9

### Heart – The Story of David, Message 5

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Let's begin by remembering that 2 Samuel is not only the story of David. It's your story. My story. The story of anyone who has a heart after God's own heart. So what have we seen so far, and where are we in this book?

- Chapter 1 was about the death of Saul.
- Chapters 2-4 were the civil war and the struggle to become one nation.
- Chapter 5 began with the conclusion of that civil war and David becoming king over not just Judah (one of the Jewish tribes) but over all of Israel.
- Chapter 5 then continues with the story of three battles: First, David attacked the fortress city of the Jebusites (Jerusalem). He defeated that stronghold. Then there were two battles against the Philistines, both of which he won.
- Chapter 6 was about the entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem and was a praise and worship passage.
- Chapter 7 was about rest from enemies.

The pattern is huge, and in many ways it's the journey of a person following hard after God. In order, the elements of the journey are this . . . death, unity, victory, praise, rest. Here's the spiritual pattern, and it's as true for you and me as it was for David:

- 1) Death produces unity
- 2) Unity produces victory
- 3) Victory produces praise
- 4) Praise produces rest

The death was the death of Saul. Who was Saul, spiritually speaking? Saul represents that part of each of us that needs to die. The "sinful self." The "flesh." The "old man." That part of us that is at war against God and His Will. The more that sinful self within us dies, the more unity we find within our own lives. Our own souls. There's a civil war within us – self versus Christ, flesh versus spirit, old man versus new man. As we pursue hard after God – the only way it can be done – the more that new man wins and the more the old man dies. I remember so clearly, many years ago, when I grew tired of being two people. Wanting both my own will and God's will. I

decided I had to die. God's Will had to prevail. Great decision. There can only be one king on the throne of my soul – your soul – and it can't be self. When you make that decision and begin to live it out, you become a whole person, in Christ.

When the civil war ended in 2 Samuel 4 and 5, victory followed. Having ended the war within, Israel and David were ready to start fighting the enemies without. They won. Handily. In other words, while death produces unity, unity then produces victory. That's why unity matters. A lot. And those who build unity are blessed by God.

Victory naturally produces praise. Praise produces rest. That's a subject in itself, but we don't have time to go there. By the way, I thought the praise last week was magnificent. I went home at rest within my soul. I hope you did too.

So here we are at chapter 9. An enormous moment in the reign of David. By the time we get to chapter 9, David was about 17-20 years into his reign. For 7 ½ years he had been king of only Judah. For 10 -12 years, he was king of all Israel.

Things are good. David is secure. The nation is at rest.

What does David decide to do next?

He decides to do good. He decides to walk in kindness. He decides to extend grace.

You might put it this way: rest produces fruit.

Let's pray.

## READ 2 SAMUEL 9

For some of you, this is a familiar passage. I preached on it 7 years ago. But I want to be prophetically clear about something.

As I was working through 2 Samuel and was tempted to skip this story, the Holy Spirit wonderfully impressed upon me that I was to preach this passage. Some of you weren't here 7 years ago. Welcome to one of the greatest stories in the Old Testament. Some of you were – welcome back to one the great statements of the Gospel, and the new things the Holy Spirit wants to impress upon us.

### I. Lo Debar – Lots of People Live There

Let's check out vs. 3-4:

*Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet." "Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."*

2 Samuel 9 tells us that Mephibosheth lived in a place called "Lo Debar."

Maybe you live there too.

Lo Debar was an out-of-the-way place – an inconspicuous village. The name means "without pasture," so it's pretty easy to imagine Lo Debar as a dry and dusty village. More desert than anything else. Maybe something like that picture you see on the screen.

Lo Debar was not the sort of place one would imagine that Mephibosheth, the grandson of King Saul and the son of the Crown Prince, would end up in.

But to understand how he got there, we have to back the story to 2 Samuel 4:4:

*Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.*

The “news from Jezreel” about Saul and Jonathan was that they had both been killed on the battlefield. Saul, of course, was the king. Jonathan was his son and the Crown Prince. Now think about it. Put yourself in the position of this nurse to Mephibosheth. You’ve just learned that the king is dead. And you’ve learned that the Crown Prince, the father to the child that you have responsibility for, is also dead. You know that, as the son of the Crown Prince, the child you have in your arms could be the next king.

But you also know that Saul’s grip on power was tenuous. You know that there’s a good chance that David’s followers will crown him as the new king. You know that events will move swiftly and are perhaps already in motion. What do you do? And why? You flee with the child. Saul’s reign is crashing down around your head. Mephibosheth’s life is more at risk than, perhaps, any other single life in Israel. Get the child away to safety before David or his men come hunting for him. There’s no time to waste.

In that chaos, Mephibosheth somehow falls and is injured. Crippled in both feet. A malady that would be his for the rest of his life.

Still, she is able to secret him away, and we don’t hear anything more about Mephibosheth for roughly 20 years when we read about him in the story in 2 Samuel 9.

So . . . I want you to consider Mephibosheth’s circumstances and the meaning of Lo Debar. I want you to get that it wasn’t just the name of a dusty village but that it was and is a spiritual location.

Let’s cut to the chase. Mephibosheth had no life. Despite the fact that when he was born, he was born into nobility. His grandfather’s sins and subsequent loss of power condemned him. He was lame in a time when to be crippled meant that you had no options in life. It’s worth noting that he didn’t even have his own home – he lived in the home of Makir. He lived where he did and how he did, because he was hiding out. Hey, if David ever got wind of where a potential rival to his throne was hanging out, he would be dead in a day. You do know the way Middle Eastern kings dealt with their rivals. Think of the ayatollahs of modern-day Iran to get the picture. Because of that reality, Lo Debar was about as off the map as you could get.

So . . . hiding out. Crippled. Fearful. Forgotten. Fallen from such great heights. Do you see how Lo Debar – the place of “no pasture” – the place where life was hard and lean - was so descriptive of Mephibosheth’s life? He’d likely lived there for about 20 years.

Now I want to start making spiritual connections immediately. Lo Debar is the place a lot of people live. In fact, it would be pretty easy to say that this is the human condition. Think about it. Our forefather Adam, who was the original head of the human race, fell. When he did so, the human race was driven out of the Garden just like Mephibosheth had been driven out of the royal palace. Adam’s fall meant that we were all crushed. Spiritually lame. Unable to walk with God in the Garden or in life. Adam and Eve, when they fell, immediately hid themselves from God. Mephibosheth was hiding out from David the King in Lo Debar. There’s no pasture in Lo Debar, and God cursed the ground after Adam’s fall.

You get the picture.

And I want you to also get that you know people who live Lo Debar right now. Today. Maybe they don't know Christ and they're hiding out from God. Maybe they knew Him once and have pretty much walked away. They're also hiding out from the King. Maybe they love the Lord, but they've been crushed by life. Maybe, like Mephibosheth, they had dreams that now are broken. Maybe it's sin. Maybe it's the sin of others. Maybe it's grief. Maybe their faith is real, but things seem so lean – so without pasture – that they live in spiritual poverty. Physically broken – relationally broken – spiritually broken. Lonely, afraid, isolated. Just hoping to somehow get through life. Just survive.

You get the picture?

Mephibosheth is every man.

Maybe you're Mephibosheth and Lo Debar is where you're living right now.

2 Samuel 9 would say this . . . God, the King, is calling you to the Palace.

## II. David – God's Heart for the Crushed

All right, on to verse 5:

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

So how do you think Mephibosheth felt when he heard that David the King was summoning him to appear before him? What do you think he expected? Death. Right?

I mean Mephibosheth knew who he was. The son of the Crown Prince of Saul's line. He had a legitimate claim to the throne. What do you think he thought was going to happen when he appeared before David? He expected to be executed.

But . . . that's exactly what he didn't experience:

*<sup>7</sup> "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."*

If Mephibosheth had the life of the crushed, David had the heart of God.

Notice that word "restore." Also notice the wording in verse 1 that begins this whole story:

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

Notice that word "kindness." It's the Hebrew word "hesed," and it's variously translated in the Bible:

"mercy" 149 times, "kindness" 40 times, "lovingkindness" 30 times, "goodness" 12 times, "kindly" five times, "merciful" four times, "favor" three times, "good" once, "goodliness" once, "pity" once<sup>1</sup>

Get the picture? It's a Hebrew picture for the idea of grace. David was extending the lovingkindness of God to Mephibosheth. I wonder why he did that? I wonder if he had ever experienced God's kindness himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (H2617). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Psalm 18, which David wrote, begins with the following statement:

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the Lord. He sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

He said:

<sup>1</sup> *I love You, O Lord, my strength.* <sup>2</sup> *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* <sup>3</sup> *I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.* <sup>4</sup> *The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.* <sup>5</sup> *The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.* <sup>6</sup> *In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From His temple He heard my voice; my cry came before Him, into His ears.*

David sums up this Psalm, and, candidly, his life in the final two verses of the Psalm:

<sup>49</sup> *Therefore I will praise You among the nations, O Lord; I will sing praises to Your name.*

<sup>50</sup> *He gives his king great victories; He shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.*

There's that very same word "kindness" again. *Hesed*. Same Hebrew word. It's very simple. David wanted to give kindness to Mephibosheth, because he had experienced kindness from God.

David knew what it was to be on the run, hiding out from a king whom he knew wanted to kill him. To live on the edge. To be alone. To be afraid. To see your dreams crushed. Mephibosheth said to David, "Why do you take notice of a dead dog like me?" Those were almost the same words that David said to Saul in the wilderness. David knew what it was like to feel so beaten up that you felt like a dead dog on the side of the road.

David understood compassion. And kindness. He had received it from God. He wanted to give it away to others. He was the king. He had authority. It was time to do something with that authority.

Do you remember how we began this series? Acts 13:22 . . .

*'I have found David son of Jesse a man after My own heart'*

And how do we know that God's heart is one of kindness? It's simple:

*"It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance."* (Romans 2:4)

This is spiritual royalty in action.

You and I can live the same way. God wants us to.

### III. The Gospel . . . Let's Do Something About It

You know the meaning of the story, don't you? It's all wrapped up in this one verse:

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

(2 Samuel 9:1)

The pivot point of the story isn't the relationship between David and Mephibosheth. Instead, the pivot point is the relationship – really, the covenant or the promise – between David and Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan. It was a

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<sup>b</sup> Hebrew *Sheol*

relationship established and, in fact, a promise made long before Mephibosheth was born . . . roughly 30 years before this moment we read about here in 2 Samuel 9.

Let me tell you that story.

David and Jonathan were about 20. They were the best of friends, though they should have been the worst of enemies. Jonathan was the Crown Prince and heir to throne of his father Saul. Samuel, the prophet, had anointed David of the house of Jesse to be the successor.

They were natural enemies competing for the same throne, but God brought them together as friends. The Bible describes the depth of their friendship in the following words:

*Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. (1 Samuel 20:17)*

To say that they were best friends would be a significant understatement. Jonathan affirmed David's call to the throne. He promised David that he would help him and support him as king. He was a humble man and wanted to honor what God had decreed. In an earlier expression of their covenant with each other, they exchanged weapon belts as a way of saying, "I will never use my sword against you, but rather my sword will always defend you."

Something extraordinary was happening between these two royal figures.

In a poignant moment, as David was fleeing into the wilderness to escape the maniacal wrath of Saul, the two of them renewed covenant and, as they did so, Jonathan said the following:

*"And the Lord be with you as He has been with my father. And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." (1 Samuel 20:13-15)*

Those were part of the terms of the covenant. Not only would they not turn on each other, but rather they would do good to one another, they would not **"cut off their kindness from the others' house forever."** In other words, they would do good to their mutual descendants. *In other words*, David promised he would show the kindness of God to Jonathan's children.

There's a trinity in this story. Mephibosheth who represents every man. You and me. And the people you and I both know who currently live in Lo Debar – the place without pasture. David, the king. He represents God.

And Jonathan, the Crown Prince. The one who died. Do you know that Jonathan is the Jesus figure in the story? It's not surprising because his life was so noble. But it was the promise that David made to Jonathan that saved Mephibosheth's life, called him from Le Debar and the place of poverty and loss, placed him before the throne of kindness and mercy, and then engrafted him into the royal family, so that—like David's own sons—he ate at the royal table for the rest of his life.

Remember, David said that he would show God's kindness to Mephibosheth **"for Jonathan's sake."**

God the King made a similar promise to Jesus the Crown Prince, the only Son of the Father, long before any of us were born. Psalm 2:8 says:

*"Ask of Me and I will give you the nations as Your inheritance."*

That's a royal and covenantal conversation between the Father and the Son. The King of heaven and the Crown Prince of the same. God said to Jesus, "Ask Me, and I will do it. I will give You the nations of the earth. The people of the earth. The lost of earth. The crushed and cut off of the earth."

Did Jesus ask and did God do it? Yes . . . and we find that “Yes” in the New Testament on the lips of Jesus Himself. Speaking of all who would come to Him from among all the various nations and people groups of the earth Jesus said:

*“My Father who has given them to Me . . .”* (John 10:29).

The Father and the Son. The King and the Crown Prince. Something extraordinary was happening between these two royal figures.

Indeed, Mephibosheth was saved on the basis of the promise – the covenant – made between David and Jonathan. You and I – and anyone else who wants it and who asks – are saved on the basis of the promise – the covenant – made between God the Father and Jesus the Son.

That’s why we say that we are secure in the beloved. Believer in Jesus, did you know that you are forever bound between the Father and the Son, eternally “stuck” and held in the covenant between them? It is about something so much larger than God’s faithfulness to you. Just as Mephibosheth’s salvation was about David’s faithfulness to Jonathan, our salvation is about God’s faithfulness to Jesus. That is why we are eternally secure and no one shall pluck us out of the Father’s hand. That’s why you’re going to make it through this life. That’s why you’re going to end up in heaven.

When you begin to put the larger pieces together, there is no mistaking what this story of David, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth is all about. It is the Gospel. This story takes place almost exactly at the mid-point of David’s reign, but it is more than the mid-point. Because David so intentionally lives out the heart of God – the Gospel – in my opinion, it is also the high point of David’s reign. Expressing kindness to a broken man is greater than defeating a giant or claiming a throne.

So this is the story of Jesus, God, and you and me. There are three obvious applications.

First of all, let me talk to the crushed. Ever felt crippled? I have. I bet you have too. Here’s something you have to know. You won’t find your destiny in Lo Debar. In hiding out from the King. The King loves you and wants you. Close to His throne, at His feet, at His table . . . in intimate relationship with Jesus is where you belong.

That’s something God is doing today. People all around are being called to greater and greater intimacy with Christ. Sometimes most especially because they’ve been crushed and have lived in Lo Debar. Sometimes you’ve got to go down before you go up.

Jesus wants you today, crushed soul. Lame person. Anyone who has lost their dreams, been crippled by life, let me tell you what the church of Jesus is. Mephibosheth. Walking with a limp is okay in the Kingdom of God. Just walk towards Jesus. You can do that, can’t you?

Secondly, for every one who is a follower of Christ. Believers in the Lord Jesus. Christians. David was determined to give God’s kindness away. He went and pursued Mephibosheth. Looked for him. And when it was obvious that Mephibosheth could not come under his own power, David sent Ziba to bring him.

David not only symbolized God the King in this story, he was also, like you and me, a simple believer and recipient of God’s kindness. He had a heart after God’s own heart, and so he had to give that kindness away.

Put it this way, the church is not Mephibosheth. We’re also David—spiritual royalty who has tasted of God’s kindness, and now it’s about giving it away.

You know people in Lo Debar. People like Mephibosheth. People who are hurting. Lonely. Crushed. Distant from the King and from the throne. To have a heart like David's heart, a heart after God's own heart, is to have a heart for them.

In the coming weeks, we are going to be doing some things as a church. Over Easter we're going to do some great outreach. We are planning to do the Easter portion of MESSIAH. Remember Christmas? It will be great. We also have plans to do outreach to families during that time, which will also be great.

During Lent – the six weeks prior to Easter, we are going to pray as a church. We don't want to do serious ministry without serious prayer. But those prayers will not only be about us. We'll be sending you out. Asking you to go to your friends and neighbors with a very simple, doable mission. Tell them that during Lent – which begins on February 22 – your church (KPC) is gathering prayer requests from all over Hampton Roads. That if they'll give you their prayer requests, not only will you pray, but your church will pray. And that we believe "Prayer Works" and that miracles will happen.

Here's the point. God cares about the person in Lo Debar. He's the King on the throne who has authority over everything. This is going to be our simple – but Holy Spirit effective – way of taking even a time of prayer and pushing out into our community so as to reach the Mephibosheths – the broken, the hurting, the crushed, the lonely, the dispossessed – with the very simple message that there is a King who cares for them.

If we are going to be like David – to have a heart after God's own heart – then first in our thoughts must be how to show the kindness of God to those distant from the throne. Friends, it's not that God has a mission for His church in the world, but rather that He has a church for His mission. His mission is the Gospel. He promised His Son the nations.

We'll be talking to you about this – the prayer focus and the Easter outreach – in coming weeks. We are going to do and to be church. That's what KPC has always been about.

Now, the third application. What if you are, today, Mephibosheth? You are of the wrong house – the house of Saul. The fallen house of Adam. What if you are the spiritually lame or crippled? What if you are distant from the King? What if you are losing hope or are without hope?

Mephibosheth had been told his whole life that David wanted to kill him. He thought the king was his enemy and that's why he hid out in Lo Debar. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The King did not hate Mephibosheth or want him dead. The King loved Mephibosheth. The King was searching for Mephibosheth. The King had it in his heart to show kindness to Mephibosheth.

God has the same heart for you.

Friend, come to the throne. Come to the King. I don't know what you have to do to get there. I don't think it matters that you are crippled in life or crushed in your soul. I don't think it matters how much you think you have lost or how greatly you have sinned or been sinned against.

What matters is not what has happened, but that the King loves you.

Come to Him. Today. Come before His throne of lovingkindness. Experience the goodness and grace that Mephibosheth found.

You too bow before the throne and experience the kindness of God. You too can sit at the King's table. You too can join the royal family. Let us pray.