



## **Studies in the Life of David**

Text

Second Samuel 9:1-13

Topic

David goes out of his way to show mercy  
to the grandson of his former rival

Title

*"Mercy Beaucoup"*

Introduction

At some point in an interview you can expect a famous person to be asked the question, "What accomplishments are you the most proud of?"

I'm not sure what King David would have answered if he had been asked. He certainly had a lot to choose from:

- His defeat of the Philistine giant, Goliath, right at the beginning of his career, is perhaps his most famous accomplishment.
- His unifying of the twelve tribes of Israel qualifies for a peace prize, for sure.
- His conquering of Jerusalem after centuries of failure was an incredible feat.
- Or maybe his planning for and preparing for the Temple that his son, Solomon, would build after his death.

I doubt we would think of what happens in Second Samuel chapter nine as one of David's greatest moments, but it is. I say that because, as you will see, David was never more Christlike than he was in his actions towards Mephibosheth, the surviving son of Jonathan and grandson of King Saul.

David decided he wanted to show kindness towards any survivors from the house of Saul. As he seeks out Mephibosheth we see God's grace and mercy towards us as lost sinners on display. And we are reminded, we who are saved, that we have become the channels of God's mercy and grace towards all the others He is seeking to save.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 God's Mercy Found You; Let Him Use You To Show His Mercy, and #2 God's Grace Fills You; Let Him Use You To Bestow His Grace.

#1 God's Mercy Found You;  
Let Him Use You To Show His Mercy  
(v1-8)

We like to say that "mercy is God not giving you what you deserve, while grace is God giving you what you don't deserve." It's a good definition, but how does it translate into action? What do mercy and grace 'look' like?

They are on display for us in this text as David first shows mercy, then bestows grace, upon Mephibosheth.

2 Samuel 9:1 Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Saul had made David a fugitive and had hunted him down to kill him for over a decade. Upon succeeding to the throne after Saul's death the normal thing for a monarch to do would be to kill any descendants of Saul's who might have a legitimate claim to the throne.

Not only did David not do that, he actively sought to find a descendant of the house of Saul in order to show him kindness.

The first thing I'd say, then, about God's mercy is that it is actively seeking folks in order to show them kindness. *God wants to save!* Dr. Norman Geisler puts it like this:

The truth is that God is more willing that all be saved than we are. For "the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not

wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God's justice demands that he condemns all sinners, but his love compels him to provide salvation for all who by his grace will believe. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

As we work through these verses bear in mind that there is a double illustration for us:

- First, David is a type of Jesus Christ to illustrate God’s mercy and grace towards all mankind.
- But, second, David is a type of **every believer in Jesus Christ** through whom God wants to show His mercy and bestow His grace towards all mankind.

We see in David what God did for us *and* what He can do through us for others.

2 Samuel 9:2 And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" He said, "At your service!"

2 Samuel 9:3 Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet."

David called what he wanted to do “the kindness of God.” He understood that he was to example for others the mercy and grace of God in practical actions.

And not just in random acts of kindness he might do but in specific tasks that showed God had truly changed his life through mercy and grace. It’s one thing to do a few kind things when it’s convenient. What David did was show God’s mercy by an act of kindness to someone he probably ought to have killed. To an enemy. At the very least, it was unexpected.

Notice the condition of the “son of Jonathan.” He was “lame in his feet.” We learned why in an earlier study. At the death of Saul and Jonathan in battle, the nurse of this boy, age five at the time, fled with him so the Philistines would not find him and kill him. No mercy could be expected

from them! In her haste she dropped him and he was severely crippled for the rest of his life.

We would say that he was made lame through a fall. So is the human race made lame through a fall - the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

But immediately God came seeking Adam and Eve, to show them “kindness.” Right there, in the Garden, while they were hiding from Him, while they were lying to Him, God promised them mercy and grace as He explained He would come in human flesh to die in their place, to save and redeem and restore them.

2 Samuel 9:4 So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar."

Alan Redpath says that “Lo-debar” means something like *barren land*, a place of emptiness and dissatisfaction. (Riverdale?). Until you come to know Jesus Christ, the whole world is Lo-debar. No matter your achievements or status in this world, you were created to have fellowship with God. The Book of Ecclesiastes says that God has put eternity in your heart (3:11) indicating you can never be whole or filled satisfied until your heart is Christ’s home.

Something, I think, that sometimes can temper our zeal as Christians is that we look at the nonbelievers we know and they seem happy, satisfied, full. *They can seem better-off than us!* Don’t let that fool you. It’s a veneer that masks their deep need. After all, what does it profit if they gain the whole world but in the end lose their soul?

2 Samuel 9:5 Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar.

About twenty years had passed since Mephibosheth had been crippled at age five. He’d been hiding out, living in fear. I don’t think it’s going too far to suggest that those who cared for him and raised him spoke badly of David and convinced him that the king had it in for him. I mean, after all,

they were hiding him from David as best they could, keeping him away from Jerusalem.

How tragic that so many children are brought up in ignorance of the Lord, or worse yet, taught by precept and example that God has abandoned the human race or is somehow responsible for its sufferings.

David issued a call for Mephibosheth to come to him. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a call. It is a call to all mankind, throughout all man's history, to come to God. The very fact that God takes the initiative is a display of mercy unfathomable to the human heart but nevertheless true.

If you are saved, think back on the moment of your conversion and you'll see that God was searching for you, calling to you. If you were saved as a child then someone was being used by God to call you to Himself.

That's because God's calling most often comes through a person preaching the Gospel. In Second Thessalonians 2:14 you read, "To this He called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"

2 Samuel 9:6 Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "Here is your servant!"

David called him by name. It reminds me that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *any* member of the human race who will believe. Those who respond are saved and their names are listed forever in His Book of Life.

2 Samuel 9:7 So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."

Commentators like to point out that David showed Mephibosheth "kindness" for the sake of someone else. It's an illustration of God the Father accepting us for the sake of Jesus Christ. For example, we read in

Ephesians 4:32, "... even as God **in Christ** forgave you." It was for the sake of Jesus that God forgave you.

It's not that God didn't want to forgive, or that He's forced to against His will. It's that Jesus died on the Cross, taking our place, to satisfy the just demands of the holiness of God. Now, for the sake of Jesus, we are accepted in Him, shown mercy and bestowed with grace.

2 Samuel 9:8 Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"

Mephibosheth sees himself as he truly is before the king. There was nothing he could do about his parentage or his crippled condition.

**Likewise you and I!** We cannot change the fact we are the descendants of Adam and Eve and are crippled by their fall.

When you got saved... or, if you're not a believer, when you **get** saved... you see yourself as you truly are. You are a sinner, separated from God, deserving of eternal judgment and its punishment. You understand that nothing good dwells in you, that there is no good work or compilation of good works that can save you. You understand you are at the mercy of God.

And then you understand what a great place that is to be because God IS merciful! He sought you in His mercy to save you. God so loved YOU that He gave His only begotten Son so that YOU would believe in Him, not perish, and have everlasting life!

As majestic and marvelous as that is, it is not the end; it's only the beginning. Next God makes you His agent, His representative, on earth to reveal Him to others by showing His mercy to them. Not just by telling folks that mercy is not getting what they deserve, but by personally not giving them what they deserve in your own interactions with them.

If you are following what we're saying, you know that it is something that cannot be done in your own strength. But in the Lord you can be looking

for those He is looking for and show them the kindness that real mercy produces.

#2 God's Grace Fills You;  
Let Him Use You To Bestow His Grace  
(v9-13)

Not getting what you deserve is only half the story. Getting what you don't deserve comes next as God bestows His amazing grace.

2 Samuel 9:9 And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house.

Mephiboseth had been living in exile for no good reason. David restored him to his family's inheritance.

God loves to restore. It doesn't mean He is obligated to restore everything that you've exiled yourself from before receiving His mercy. For example: He cannot restore a failed marriage if you or your spouse have remarried. But it is God's desire to restore. Many of you, including myself, can testify to His restorative powers!

2 Samuel 9:10 You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephiboseth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

Two 'worlds' are depicted here in this verse:

1. There is the everyday world of their agrarian society in which crops were planted, then harvested. That world had its ups and its downs depending on circumstances.
2. Then there is the world of the palace in which a table was spread bountifully everyday despite the temporary circumstances outside the palace.

So, too, with us there is our life as a pilgrim and stranger journeying homeward to Heaven. It's filled with circumstantial ups and, sadly, downs.

Some of those 'downs' are pretty deep valleys that you may have to travel through for years. But simultaneously there is the realm of fellowship with God. He walks with you, does He not, through the valley of the shadow of death. In that realm you have God's bounty from grace. Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places is available to you.

2 Samuel 9:11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do." "As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons."

This is the third of four times in these verses that we read "he shall eat at my table" (v7, 10, 11 & 13). It is to remind us that we were created to know God and to have a relationship with Him. More than that, the relationship is to be a joyous one - like sharing a feast with Him where He is the host and we bring only ourselves and He supplies everything else in superabundance.

More even than that: **He looks upon us as if we were His own "sons" because we are in His Son, Jesus Christ.**

2 Samuel 9:12 Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth had a son. We know nothing about him except that we read in First Chronicles 8:34ff that he had a son and grandsons. Again we see the emphasis on the home, on the family. We would hope that Mephibosheth would raise his own son very differently than he had been raised. Raise him to love the king and understand his mercy and grace.

If you have children it is job one to reveal God to them, to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

"All who dwelt in the house of Ziba" served Mephibosheth. It reminds us that God is causing all things to work together for good for those who love Him and are the called. But it is always according to His purposes. In the life of Mephibosheth that means that a little later on, Ziba will slander his master and spread a lie that he has turned against David. But

Mephibosheth reacts in a godly manner, retains his integrity, and grows in his maturity. All things working together for his ultimate, spiritual good.

2 Samuel 9:13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet.

You might read that as to say, “even though he was lame in both his feet.” Two things about that:

1. “Even though he was lame in both his feet,” handicapped and deformed, David had no objection to him coming to the table. It is true, and cannot be emphasized too much, that God receives you just as you are. If you are not saved, don't waste any time trying to clean-up or improve yourself. That is what only God can do, and He does it starting with the heart and working out. Even after you are saved, your flesh remains. You struggle against sin in your inward parts. Still, you are welcome to come to Him.
2. “Even though he was lame in both his feet,” Mephibosheth made his way to David's table everyday! Think how difficult it would have been for him, or, perhaps, how embarrassing. There were no ADA requirements in the palace. No wheelchair ramps because there were no wheelchairs! Yet he found his way there. So, too, you and I must overcome any of our ‘lame’ excuses for missing-out on either fellowship with God or with His saints.

A thoughtful person could look at King David and, in his dealings with Mephibosheth, see God's dealings with them and with the human race. It was the Gospel being illustrated. Just as David showed mercy and bestowed grace, so does the God of Israel, the King of kings, seek you out to show mercy and to bestow grace.

And, as we've said, the illustration doesn't stop there. David also illustrates the life of a saved person to whom God has shown mercy and bestowed grace. That person is to be God's channel, His conduit, His representative, through whom He does the same for everyone they encounter.

How do you tap-into all of this? **Well, you simply accept the invitation to dinner!**

David was inviting Mephibosheth to this life of feasting at his table. He could have refused. Think about it. Here was David inviting him because of mercy and grace. If Mephibosheth declined, would David then have him incarcerated? Assassinated? No, it was an invitation in the truest sense. Mephibosheth would have lived-out his life in fear, in loathing, in Lo-debar.

It was an invitation he ought to accept, and did accept.

If you are not a believer, *God is inviting you to dine with Him!*

If you are a believer, here's something to consider. Often long-standing invitations can begin to take a lesser priority. You start thinking, "I can go any time I want," but then find yourself going less and less frequently because of it.

Individually (in your devotions) and corporately (in your church) take a look at how you are treating God's invitation to fellowship with Him at His table.

Then come just as you are to the feast, get filled, and invite others to do likewise!