

Lesson 1 3 February 2013

David Shows Kindness to Mephibosheth

Lesson Scope: 2 Samuel 4:4; 9; 16:1-4; 19:24-30

Lesson Focus

After the death of King Saul, David was anointed king over Judah. Abner, however, immediately set up Ishbosheth, Saul's son, to be king over the rest of Israel. Only after seven years of war and bloodshed would Saul's family relinquish their rule to David.

As king over all twelve tribes, David focused on enlarging the kingdom and securing its borders. In the midst of his busy schedule, he remembered the promise made to Jonathan that he would show kindness to Jonathan's house forever (1 Samuel 20:14-17). Through the help of a former servant of Saul, David located Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan. David's kindly behavior toward him in raising him from a lowly state and providing for his every need stands as an illustration of God's grace in redeeming fallen humanity.

Mankind has been bruised by the Fall and alienated from God. However, all who receive the divine provisions for redemption become sons and daughters of the King.

This lesson covers the typology in the story of David and Mephibosheth. What David did foreshadows the work of Christ in seeking lost souls and restoring them to Himself. This beautiful account teaches us the importance of compassion springing from a loving and caring heart and emphasizes the motivation of a compassionate heart, especially the compassion of God in seeking a poor sinner.

Knowing what it is like to be crippled with sin should help instill compassion toward the lost around us. Challenge yourself to a new awareness of the crippling effects of sin that we see all around us. What are we doing to alleviate the suffering of sin? "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22, 23).

Lesson Aim: To portray the typology of Christ's redemption of fallen humanity.

Theme Verses: [Titus 3:4-5](#). But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Lesson Text

The Needy Soul

[2 Samuel 4:4](#) ⁴ And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *that was* lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name *was* Mephibosheth.

The Seeking King

[2 Samuel 9:3-6](#) ³ 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. ⁴ And the king said unto him, *Where is* he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he *is* in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. ⁵ Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. ⁶ Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

The Gracious Provision

[2 Samuel 9:7-13](#) ⁷ And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew 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. ⁸ And he bowed himself, and said, *What is* thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I *am*? ⁹ Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. ¹⁰ Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹ Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he

shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. ¹² And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth. ¹³ So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

The Rejoicing Servant

2 Samuel 19:24-30 ²⁴ And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace. ²⁵ And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth? ²⁶ And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame. ²⁷ And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes. ²⁸ For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king? ²⁹ And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. ³⁰ And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king *is* come again in peace unto his own house.

Questions for Study

The Needy Soul

1. How does the condition of Mephibosheth typify fallen humanity?

The Seeking King

2. Why was David motivated to show kindness toward Saul's house?

3. Why is God seeking the souls of lost men today?

The Gracious Provision

4. List the benefits Mephibosheth received from King David.

5. What is the role of God's grace to man in the work of salvation?

The Rejoicing Servant

6. What do Mephibosheth's actions reveal about his attitude toward David?

7. How should we respond when we are wronged?

8. What are we to do while we wait for the King's return?

Analyzing the Passage

In Middle Eastern and Oriental ideology, competing dynasties rarely showed kindness to each other. Instead, a change in dynasties usually meant death to all descendants of the conquered ruler. Mephibosheth seems to have had some apprehensions when David called him. But David reassuringly said, "Fear not." His compassion and respect demonstrated his godly character and his unselfishness.

Likely David's compassion toward Jonathan's house was prompted by a twofold concern. First, he wished to honor his covenant with Jonathan, and second, he desired to end the conflict that had been raging for years between his house and the house of Saul.

In the Middle East, the phrase dead dog was a term of self-abasement and contempt. Mephibosheth's use of the phrase reveals how useless and contemptible he felt before David.

Lo-debar means "no pasture." This suggests that Mephibosheth came from a desolate, unproductive place, but he was raised to a position of great honor and superabundance.

In return for David's kindness, Mephibosheth remained faithful to him, especially during the time of Absalom's usurpation. His actions during David's exile were a sign of public sorrow. Even after David gave all of Mephibosheth's land to Ziba as a result of Ziba's deception (2 Samuel 16:1-4), Mephibosheth willingly relinquished all in the joy of David's safe return.

Principles and Applications

The Needy Soul

1. All mankind since Adam have received the fallen nature by no choice of their own (4:4). In her haste to escape pending danger, Mephibosheth's nurse dropped him, and he was crippled for life. His handicap was no fault of his own. Likewise, humanity has received a fallen nature through the sin of one man, Adam. This nature is inherited; man has no choice in receiving it.

2. The Fall of Man has damaged humanity for life (4:4). Mephibosheth was lame on both his feet for the rest of his life (9:13). He had to depend on others to do his work and to care for him. Just as

Mephibosheth's both legs were damaged, so mankind has a twofold injury as well: the inherited sin nature and the condemnation of personal sin. The fallen nature and the consequences of sin are with man for life. Man must depend on the works of Another to raise him above the crippling influences of sin.

The Seeking King

3. God is not willing that any should perish and is seeking the souls of men (9:3). David actively searched for someone from the house of Saul so he could keep his covenant with Jonathan. He found Mephibosheth and renewed the relationship between his house and the house of Saul. God is seeking the souls of all men so He can restore the relationship He had with man before the Fall. The work of Christ that God graciously provided for fallen man makes it possible for him to receive redemption and to be in communion with his heavenly Father again.

4. God through Christ graciously provides redemption for fallen man (9:5). David sent for Mephibosheth and renewed the relationship between his house and the house of Saul. Through the work of Christ, we can be redeemed and our relationship with God is restored.

The Gracious Provision

5. Man is not worthy of God's gracious favor and can never repay it (9:5-8). It was not what Mephibosheth did or what his position was that caused David's actions. He was barely above being a poor beggar, and the opportunity to return David's kindness in full was nil. Fallen mankind is worthy of death and can do nothing to earn salvation. God's gracious offer of redemption is free for all, and we can express our appreciation and love for His kindness toward us only through a life fully surrendered to Him.

6. Those who receive Christ and the offer of salvation receive riches untold and become sons and daughters of the King (9:7-11). David restored all the land of Saul to Mephibosheth and charged the family and servants of Ziba to care for the land and to supply his needs. He placed him in an exalted position in the royal palace and invited him to the king's table. God has far greater riches in store for the redeemed than we can imagine. All who are saved are adopted into the family of God and accepted as His children.

The Rejoicing Servant

7. The redeemed anticipate the return of their Redeemer (19:24).

Mephibosheth was awaiting the return of David and came out to meet him. Although He certainly is not in exile, Christ is coming again to claim all that is His. Are we watching and waiting to meet Him in the air at the moment of His return?

8. In the presence of the Redeemer, the redeemed count all other things as loss (19:30). Mephibosheth's lost possessions did not matter to him. He sought no revenge or punishment for his deceitful, scheming servant. What was much more important to him was that David had returned in peace.

Those who have Christ in their lives view their earthly possessions as of relatively little value. That is why we can go to prayer meeting with hay lying and rain imminent. That is why we can say no to the pressure to take out insurances that will destroy our trust in God or to use litigation to gain material compensation. We avoid using technology that is bound to destroy our pilgrim-and-stranger lifestyle and even our moral purity because Christ means far more to us than material gain. As redeemed people, we need to "set [our] affection on things above" (Colossians 3:2) and "[endure] joyfully the spoiling of [our] goods" (Hebrews 10:34).

Important Teachings

1. All mankind since Adam have received the fallen nature by no choice of their own (4:4).
2. The Fall of Man has damaged humanity for life (4:4).
3. God is not willing that any should perish and is seeking the souls of men (9:3).
4. God through Christ graciously provides redemption for fallen man (9:5).
5. Man is not worthy of God's gracious favor and can never repay it (9:5-8).
6. Those who receive Christ and the offer of salvation receive riches untold and become sons and daughters of the King (9:7-11).
7. The redeemed anticipate the return of their Redeemer (19:24).
8. In the presence of the Redeemer, the redeemed count all other things as loss (19:30).

Answers to Questions

1. How does the condition of Mephibosheth typify fallen humanity?

Mankind, born with a sinful nature through no fault of his own, is affected by sin for life. That Mephibosheth was crippled in both legs could typify the twofold problem of sin—the sinful nature and sin itself. Man is helpless to do anything about his sinful condition. He must depend on Christ for assistance to rise above the handicap of sin.

2. Why was David motivated to show kindness toward Saul's house?

He was motivated to show kindness toward Saul's house because of his promise to Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14-17). Also, it may have been a political move to end the strife between his house and the house of Saul.

3. Why is God seeking the souls of lost men today?

God desires to restore the fellowship He had with man before the Fall. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

4. List the benefits Mephibosheth received from King David.

He received all the inheritance of Saul. Ziba, his family, and his servants were assigned to care for his land and supply his needs. He had a place to live in Jerusalem and was guest at the king's table.

5. What is the role of God's grace to man in the work of salvation?

God's grace is free. Man did nothing to deserve salvation, yet there was provision made to be saved. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God seeks the lost. His Word and His Spirit, as agents of His grace, appeal to the lost and point them to Christ.

6. What do Mephibosheth's actions reveal about his attitude toward David?

His display of public mourning indicated that his concern for David was greater than his own personal needs. His readiness to forgive David and forget David's hasty mistake of giving away his land and believing Ziba's false accusation show his love and appreciation for David. His considering himself unworthy of David's kindness shows his humility. Going out and meeting David indicated that he lived in watchfulness and anticipation of David's return.

7. How should we respond when we are wronged?

We should not retaliate but instead return good for evil. We must be willing to forgive and forget wrongs toward us. Accepting unjust damages or losses of our possessions or reputation is an indication of a spir-

itual, heavenly outlook.

8. *What are we to do while we wait for the King's return?*

We must be watching and waiting for the return of our King. We must also be aware of the hopeless people around us and, with a heart of compassion, help the lost who are not ready for the return of Christ.

Summarizing the Lesson

David's actions typify the compassion God shows in calling the sinner to Himself. Mephibosheth belonged to a royal line, but he was ruined by a fall. While living in exile, he was remembered because of a covenant and was called into the king's presence and exalted because of the merits of another. He became the recipient of a large inheritance.

As recipients of the compassion of God, we should, out of a thankful heart of love, endeavor to show compassion to others. God can use our actions of compassion to touch the hearts of sinful men and call more souls to Himself.

Research Guide

1. *Old Testament Bible History*, by Alfred Edersheim, may offer greater insights to this account.

2. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* has an informative article on Mephibosheth