

Introduction

It is good to be back with you this morning. I have completed my summer respite and returned about a week ago from a fabulous trip to the Swiss Alps. There were so many amazing experiences it was jam packed with excitement, adventure, and awe. We could also characterize the life of King David that way as well. There are several low points, but many are the high points. After about a year in Galatians, which we completed, we are turning back to 2 Samuel to complete the study that we started on the life of King David. In returning, we find ourselves at a definite high point in David's life.

[Read text and Pray]

Looking back a couple years, we began this series of sermons on the life of David. We went from the declaration of Samuel that the Lord had sought out a man after his own heart to be prince over his people to the anointing of David to his defeat of Goliath to his flight from Saul to his ascendancy to the throne. And then we saw the covenant God made with David for his descendant to reign eternally on his throne. Chapter 8 finally provided a summary of the conquests of David. Now chapter 9 brings us to a place where David has time to catch his breath. Relative peace has settled in and God's eternal covenant has been established. David has time to reflect, to think about the past and about the future.

Many of you have asked about our trip to Switzerland and you wanted to see photos. So I put some up in the pre-service slides. I picked just a few of the most outstanding ones. I had been jokingly telling people I had taken about 600 of them, but the other night when I was transferring them from my phone I realized it was in fact 1,100 photos. Anyway, I took those photos on the run. We were on the move from place to place with schedules to keep and trains to catch. The trip and its experiences were certainly epic ones, once-in-a-lifetime experiences. But the night before we departed from Switzerland to return home, I was thumbing through my photos and I had a little time to think. And I just became overwhelmed with the magnitude of what we had been able to experience. I had time to think, and gratitude and amazement settled upon me afresh. Having received from the Lord his kindness in this way, I was like primed to say afresh to the Lord, "what can I do for you? What do you want me to do?"

Well, I think that is somewhat how David felt at this time. Catching his breath in gratitude and amazement at the mercy of God in his life, it seems he began asking, "what can I do? Lord, what do you want me to do now?" And apparently he got a clear answer. "David, do you remember the covenant you made to Jonathan? Do you remember the promise you made to Saul?" Jonathan was the heir to Saul's throne, but he was also David's best friend. He knew that God had chosen David to be king and he was fine with that. He pledged allegiance to David, but he appealed to David that once he was king and once his enemies were subdued that he would show covenant kindness to him and to his house by not killing them off. David so swore to Jonathan. And then later when David spared the life of Saul, Saul admitted that David would eventually become king and asked David to swear he would not cut off his offspring after him, and David swore.

Now that things have settled a bit, these oaths arise in the mind of David. And he is not a covenant breaker. He is a covenant keeper. So he takes steps to fulfill the pledges he had made. The focal

point of this text is that for the sake of keeping covenant, David shows mind-boggling kindness to a pitiful and undeserving enemy. There are several matters to underscore as we break down the text.

First, notice ...

I. The Covenant Search.

King David, recalling the covenant he made with Jonathan, wonders if there was anyone left of the house of Saul that he could show him kindness for the sake of Jonathan. A lot of time had passed—years. In fact as many as 15-20 years have now passed since David swore to Jonathan to show kindness to his offspring. David could argue that the promise he had made was such a long time ago. He could have reasoned that so much had changed. He could have come up with any number of excuses just to forget the promise. But he had given his word. He had made the covenant. And he was not going to allow a change in circumstance or the passing of time to excuse him from the solemn vow he had made. So he instigated a search.

Here is a good spot for us to ask ourselves how faithful we are to the promises and covenants we have made and how faithful we will be to the covenants we are yet to make. It is a mark of godliness to keep covenant and to fulfill our word. Faithfulness is part of the Spirit's fruit on our lives. Keeping one's word means keeping it even when there is personal cost. Psalm 15 includes among the characteristics of the godly this point. They swear to their own hurt and do not change. Even when there is a cost to self, their word is a commodity of higher value. Hence it is that wedding vows promise to be faithful and steadfast for better or WORSE, for richer or POORER, in SICKNESS and in health. God's fulfillment of his promises to his people comes at inestimable cost to himself. It cost his only Son, but that did not deter the Lord from fulfilling his word.

What about you and me? How easily we can tell ourselves that failing to keep our word is okay because of this circumstance or that circumstance. It is sin from which we need to repent. David kept his word here as the Lord himself does. And we need to fulfill our word as well. It is a mark of godliness.

Let's turn next to ...

II. The Covenant Beneficiary.

David engaged in a search. Is there anyone remaining alive from the house of Saul? David determined to find out. His people found Ziba, the servant of Saul. He reported to David that, yes, there was still one descendant of Saul who was alive. He was a son of Jonathan who was a cripple.

We learned back in 2 Samuel 4 that when news came to the house of Saul that he and Jonathan were dead, there was hysteria. Mephibosheth was five years old. His nurse grabbed him up to flee and he fell and became lame.

That he was crippled would certainly annoy most royals. Kings want to surround themselves with pretty people, with those who make the king and his entourage look good. However, Mephibosheth's lameness did not daunt David. He pressed for more information.

Where is he? He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. I looked up the meaning of the name Machir. It means sold, purchased, enslaved. I looked up the meaning of Lo Debar. It means "no pasture." Furthermore, I learned that nobody knows for sure where Lo Debar was actually located. These elements of the narrative suggest that this son of Jonathan represents a most undesirable condition. Mephibosheth was an enemy of the king because he was the

descendant of the rival royal line. He belonged to the previous regime. Such were commonly eradicated to secure the stability of the current regime.

So here he was. He was an enemy to the king under the threat of death. He was lame and incapacitated and impoverished. He existed in a practical condition of enslavement. Unable to provide for himself, he was dependent on the provisions of others. And in effect, he was lost in the land of obscurity in a backwoods town nobody was to remember. He was pretty much meaningless to the world.

But look what happens. David sends for this pitiful man. Can you imagine? Every day begins as every other one had begun beforehand. There he is, the cripple over in his corner just existing and depending. All of a sudden there is a knock at the door. Yes? We are looking for Mephibosheth, son of Saul. The king has sent for him. Mephibosheth sighs, "I knew this day was coming." He begins to tremble with fear. His connection to Saul has finally caught up with him. He is an enemy of the king. He is a cripple who can do nothing for himself, having with no hope, living in the land of oblivion. And now he is being summoned by the king. And for him that can only mean one thing. He will die.

Such is the condition of every human being in a spiritual sense. We are already dead. We are without hope and without God in the world. We are enemies with God. By birth we belong to the prince of this world who is at war with God. We are sinners by nature. We can do nothing to help ourselves or change ourselves or make ourselves acceptable to God. We are lost in the land of oblivion. Eternal death is the sentence we all deserve. What are we to think that the king is calling out to us? And he does. He calls to us through the preaching of the gospel. It is a message that calls us to come. Come to the king! If you haven't responded to that call, I hope you will today.

We need now to direct our attention to ...

III. The Covenant Purpose

David sends for the crippled son of Jonathan. He brings the man to himself. The text underscores that David brought him from the house of Machir (the house of slavery) from the lost land of Lo Debar where there is no pasture. And Mephibosheth (this is the first time in this chapter that we hear his name) came to David and fell on his face in homage. He comes as the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, but that is not how David addresses him. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" He knew him not as a son of his enemy but as a person in his own right with his own name. Friends, this is personal and it is intimate. To be known and to be called by name by the king is a privilege. It indicates personal knowledge and personal connection. David knew the cripple by name. And I want you to know that the Lord of the universe knows your name. He calls all the stars by name and he certainly knows yours. And he calls you personally to come to him. Mephibosheth responded in humility and homage and faith: "I am your servant."

David then articulates his purpose in regard to Mephibosheth. We have already known that David's purpose was to show kindness. In fact it is clear and should grip our attention that, in verse 3, the king tells Ziba his intention is to show the covenant kindness OF GOD. Now that purpose is made plain to Mephibosheth. We should see three aspects of that kindness.

1. His purpose in the first place is ELIMINATION. He aims to eliminate the fear of Mephibosheth. David says, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan." "Do not fear" has one overriding message here. It is to say, "I am not going to kill you!" I did not summon

you here to take your life but to restore life and hope to you. This is covenant kindness. It is giving the opposite of what is rightly expected. So, first, the death penalty is eliminated.

2. The purpose of kindness in the second place is PROVISION. David says, "I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father." This would mean provision. Mephibosheth would receive his rightful inheritance. The result would be an abundance of provision. He would no longer need to depend on Machir. He himself would be the possessor and landowner. No worries.

3. The purpose of David's covenant kindness in the third place is POSITION. Prior to this moment Mephibosheth's position was essentially that of enslavement and dependency. Even before David he falls on his face and proclaims himself a servant. It is the truth after all. It was only right. But David responds with the promise that Mephibosheth from this point forward would be treated not as a servant but as a son. "You will eat at my table always." Mephibosheth was to eat at David's table like one of the king's sons." Grovel at the king's feet? No! He was to be honored as though he were a son of the king.

All in all, David's covenant kindness went much further than that which he had promised Jonathan. He not only spared Mephibosheth's life, he lavished blessing upon him. He went beyond adequate provision. He took him from Lo Debar where there was no pasture. He brought him to green pastures. David himself prepared a table for him. But then we recall David was not simply showing kindness. He was showing the covenant kindness ... OF GOD. God's kindness always supercedes that of what humans consider. Psalm 23 says, "the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want" but also "my cup overflows." To receive the kindness of God is to receive an abundance, a fullness. From Christ's fullness, John declares in John 1:16, "we have all received, grace upon grace."

Let's just put into summary the covenant kindness of God exemplified in David. He embraces the lame. He seeks the lost. He overturns the enmity. He restores the inheritance. He feeds the hungry at his table as a son.

It is a beautiful and powerful display of the covenant kindness of God through Christ to those whom he calls to himself. Once again David gloriously points us to Christ Jesus.

David was undaunted by Mephibosheth's lameness. And Christ comes to the spiritually lame and pitiful. Dead in our trespasses and sins and unable to do what is acceptable, Christ sets his love on those who have nothing to offer but their wickedness and inability.

David pursued this seemingly lost son of Saul. Likewise Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

David overruled the enmity between himself and Mephibosheth at personal cost to himself. He sought an enemy and made him like a son. Even so Christ Jesus is our peace. Ephesians 2:16 says he abolished the hostility, the enmity, between us and God through the cross. He carried out covenant kindness at great personal cost for himself. While we were lost, weak, and enemies, Christ overturned the enmity. This is the point of Paul in Romans 5:6-10.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous person ... but God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

David restored to Mephibosheth his inheritance. Even so Christ has made us joint-heirs with himself of the riches of God himself. Romans 8:17 says Christ's followers are "children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."

David brought Mephibosheth to his banqueting table to share the table with David's sons as though he were one himself. Likewise, the Lord himself prepares a table before his sheep. Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 22:29-30: "I assign to you as my Father assigned to me a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." This is a fore-glimpse of the wedding supper of the Lamb. It is an image of fellowship and rejoicing and privilege that will forever be the delight of those in Christ's kingdom. And we are reminded of it every time we observe the Lord's Supper. As you breeze through the last half of this chapter, you find that everything David promised he performed. Truly he shows us the covenant kindness of the Lord. And Jesus will do the same. Everything he has promised, he will do. So do not refuse his call! Respond to his summons. Humbly submit to Christ as a servant. Though you are an enemy of his throne by nature, he will rescue you from death. He will grant you the glory of being called an adopted son of God.

Finally, this morning, I want you to see ...

IV. The Covenant Response

One more aspect of this narrative needs to be highlighted. And this is the response of Mephibosheth to the bewildering purpose of David's kindness. Did that not jump out at you in verse 8? Mephibosheth paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"

The response to the covenant kindness of God shown through David is absolute astonishment. There can be no adequate explanation to the question, "why?!" He who was an enemy of the king has been sought out by the king and welcomed to the table of the king to mingle with the family of the king and to be known by name to the king. Pitiful. Undesirable. An enemy. And lost. And yet LOVED!!!! It is truly astonishing. But it is the explanation of covenant kindness. It is kindness shown not because it is deserved or earned but because it has been promised by one who is faithful to his word and willing to give of himself in order to keep the promise.

And it depicts in living color the reality of the salvation that is received by those who hear Christ call their name and leave the enslavement of their incapacity for the privilege of his invitation to have our lostness removed, our enmity overturned, our heirship be restored, and our place at his table set. We are no better than a dead dog. Who are we that Christ should show regard for us? If this truth does not make you shake your head in wonder, awe, and praise, then it may well be that you do not understand the gospel. You need to see in David the beauty and glory of the grace and kindness of God. You need to see in Mephibosheth a portrait of yourself apart from Christ.

Conclusion

Everybody wants to know what was the favorite part of our trip. What was that magical high-point? For me it was without question our trip to a mountain peak called Klein Matterhorn. There is a place they call Glacier Paradise. We rode cable cars and a cable gondola over mountains and glaciers to an elevation of 12,740 ft. From that vantage point you have a spectacular view of numerous mountain peaks including and especially the Matterhorn. I was so moved that I was speechless and a couple tears trickled down my cheek.

We might also ask what is the high point in the life of David. Some may say it was his defeat of Goliath. But others suggest that the chapter we have studied today is it. It certainly is one of if not

the height of the exemplary part of David's life because in this act of covenant kindness he clearly gives a taste of the glorious covenant kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our proper response is awe and wonder toward the Lord and a zeal to be a people who keep our word and who live out God's covenant kindness towards others.