

# The Life of David

## Week 15: Grace Covenant King

2 Samuel 9

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- December 3, 2023

Good morning, Grace. What did I tell you about Christmas at Grace, huh? I love this month!

There are multiple stories in the life of David that give us an iconic look at what it means to become a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. There are pictures that are portrayed in these stories that help us know what it looks like to become like Christ, sometimes in a particular part of life.

And today we're going to look at 2 Samuel 9. And in that chapter, we're going to be able to peer into the heart of King David. And in that, we'll be looking into the heart of God himself—the great King Jesus.

We'll also have a portrait of what our salvation looks like in a way that I hope will give you a new appreciation today of what your salvation looks like and what it means and the power that it has on you.

Now the context of 2 Samuel 9 is—and you need to know this—at this point in David's reign he is the undisputed king of all of Israel. And things are good. And so, all his enemies, inside and outside Jerusalem and Israel, are vanquished. So, David is now pausing to put his house in order.

You need to know this: that in all of human history, for a vast majority of monarchies and dictatorships, putting your house in order means this—you're going to hunt down and find every remaining relative of your predecessor you haven't already killed. You're cleaning up loose ends. You're ending the competition.

## **2 Samuel 9:1**

**Then David said, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him **kindness** for Jonathan’s sake?”**

Knowing that to be true, 2 Samuel 9:1 is especially startling. “Then David said, ‘Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’” See how “kindness” is in red? That’s the word of the day—“show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake.”

Now, if you remember, Jonathan is David’s dearest friend, his soul mate. He’s also the crown prince. He’s the oldest son of the previous King Saul. At this point he has perished at Saul’s side. And so, now David is putting out a command to begin a nationwide search for any and all relatives of Saul, and especially for Jonathan’s sake. And they are able to find a lead through a man named Ziba. Ziba is a former servant of Saul’s. And he says this.

## **2 Samuel 9:3**

**And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the **kindness** of God to him?”**

**Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.”**

“And the king said, ‘Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?’ Ziba said to the king, ‘There is still a son of Jonathan.’” Yeah ... okay. The rest of the verse: “ ‘He is crippled in his feet.’”

This son of Jonathan is named Mephibosheth. And when he was just a young child, enemies were attacking and raiding their house, and Mephibosheth’s nanny grabbed him as a toddler and runs. And she trips on something, and drops him on his feet, and both his feet are broken. And he’s left permanently crippled, disabled.

And at this point he’s living in a place called Lo-debar. And as you would imagine, in a place named “Lo-debar,” it probably looks just like that. He’s hiding out there.

## **2 Samuel 9:6-8**

**And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. <sup>7</sup> And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you **kindness** for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.**

**<sup>8</sup> And Mephibosheth paid homage and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?”**

And David says, *Go and fetch him. Go get him for me. I want to meet this man, the son of Jonathan.* And then in verse 6 it says, “And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage to him. And David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.’ And Mephibosheth paid homage and said, ‘What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?’”

David is deaf to this protest from Mephibosheth. Boom! Just like that, Mephibosheth is given an extravagant gift of wealth. He receives his grandfather’s ranch. David puts Ziba as the head foreman. He doesn’t even have to work that ranch. And then, boom! He receives this priceless gift of honor where Mephibosheth will now dine at the king’s table in Jerusalem—always.

## **2 Samuel 9:13**

**So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and always ate at David’s table like one of the king’s sons; and Mephibosheth was lame in both feet.**

Look how the story ends. “And then Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and always ate at David’s table like one of the king’s sons.” Oh yeah, the last thing that is mentioned here is “And Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet.”

## Three Things about Mephibosheth

Wow. That's some story. It gets better. Let me explain. The more you know, the better the story gets, because to appreciate the deeper, more profound meaning, you need to know three things about Mephibosheth, the victim of this kindness David is giving him as a gift.

### 1. Mephibosheth Is Technically an Enemy of David

The first one is that Mephibosheth is technically an enemy of David. As a descendant of the previous king, he's a threat to the dynasty of David. And that's why, when Mephibosheth comes into the presence of David, he falls face down and pays homage. The word is "prostrate." It means to fall down face first. Don't look up. And he clearly is terrified, because the first thing David says to him is, "Do not be afraid." *Don't worry. Me getting my house in order is not going to end with your life. It's going to be looking for ways to bless you.*

That's why he says, *Look, why do you care about me? I'm just a dead dog. I am no threat to you.*

### 2. Mephibosheth Is Lame

Another attribute you need to appreciate in Mephibosheth is that he's lame in both feet. Was that mentioned? I think it was. Yeah, it was mentioned before his name. It's the first thing we hear about him. And it's the very last thing in this chapter. And in that culture, with some of their values, but also in their economy itself, a man was good for working the ranch and farm or good in military. And Mephibosheth is good for neither of those. And so, he says, "Who am I but a dead dog? I'm no threat to you, David."

### 3. Mephibosheth's Name Means "Spreader of Shame"

If it weren't just that he was an enemy and lame, Mephibosheth's name can be translated as "spreader of shame." In a shame-based culture (think Asia) his name means "the spreader of shame." No wonder he's held out and is hiding in a place called Lo-debar. Lo-debar means "no place." It means that there's no pasture.

Remember when *Star Wars* started—the first movie—with Luke Skywalker in Tatooine—that place? That's like a resort beach that the people of Lo-debar go to once a year.

So, in summary, here's what we have. We have a current enemy living in nowhere who is useless and shameful. And then---kindness from David invades his life, and he has untold wealth and unimaginable honor as he dines at the king's table as his son ... always. That's loyalty to Jonathan. That's love. That's loyal love. That's the lovingkindness of David.

### ***Hesed: Steadfast Love, Lovingkindness, Covenant Loyalty***

And think about this in Mephibosheth's life. What a difference a day makes. Right? More accurately, what a difference a word makes. There's a word for this type of kindness that David is giving. The kindness of the Lord is a Hebrew word—*hesed*. Steadfast love, lovingkindness, covenant loyalty. It is so rich with meaning that we have nineteen different English words that we'll use as synonyms to try and describe what this word *hesed* means.

Last week we looked at a story, and we found that it meant “loyal devotion.” And this week it means “loyal love.” It means “loyal grace.” “Grace” means that it's a gift; the “loyal” part means that you can depend on it. It's dependable. I can depend on this gift being given to me.

It is costly, it is selfish, it is loyal grace expressed in actions. Let me take the “grace” church word out of it—it means that it's a gift where you endow a gift to someone that is unmerited. And it's a dependable gift that's unmerited. It's a commitment to lavish something upon somebody who is undeserving.

Let me say this again. *Hesed* is grace. It's an act of endowing unmerited favor upon someone. It means that it's a gift to lavish upon an undeserving person. It's loyal grace. We're going to call it “covenant grace.” It's a commitment.

And if you have ever received *hesed*, it has changed your life. It has changed your identity. If you've received this Hebrew word *hesed* from God himself through salvation in Jesus Christ, or from a brother or sister in Christ, where you have an experience where you have this loyal love, this loyal gift that you receive that you can count on—it will transform you. Because *hesed* has so much power. Around this church we say “Grace transforms.” If we were a Hebrew church, we'd say “*Hesed* transforms.” Because *hesed* is the most powerful change agent in the human soul. It just needs to be received. Because it changes a soul and it changes a person from the inside out.

You think Mephibosheth's life was changed by this gift of *hesed*? Oh, I think it was. Don't you? His life, his identity was changed. He starts the story, and he calls himself nothing more than a dead dog. (By the way, it's the worst thing you could call someone in that culture.) And he doesn't just have a good day when he becomes best-in-show dog—maybe David heals his feet for him or something. No, no—he changes his whole identity. His dignity is altered to *I have full human status, and not just any human—I will dine at the king's table like a son always.*

That's *hesed*. That's the power of *hesed* to change the human soul. And it's no wonder that people will embroider this on their clothes or tattoo it onto their bodies permanently. This is the love of God—the loyal love of God. This is the loyal love of God that is a gift. It's covenant grace. It's a powerful story. It paints a picture so that we understand what the heart of the king is like and what our salvation is like.

### How and Why Does David Extend This Grace?

But wait ... there's more. I have a couple of questions. Why does David do this? And how does David do this? Why and how does David do this? There are two reasons. It has to do with *hesed*.

#### 1. Promise of *Hesed*: Loyal Devotion

One is a promise of *hesed* last week—loyal devotion. We found out that's one definition—loyal devotion. David and Jonathan ... soul mates ... made covenant promises of loyal devotion to one another. They both promised, *We will take care of each other's families for as long as we will live.*

#### 1 Samuel 20:13b-15a

**“May the Lord be with you as He had been with my father. <sup>14</sup> But show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, so that I may not be killed ... <sup>15</sup> Do not ever cut off your loyal love from my family.”**

And this promise of *hesed*—when Jonathan is asking this in chapter 20 when they make these promises---this is Jonathan's version: “May the Lord be with you, David, as he had been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness”—*hesed*—like that of the Lord as long as I live,

so that I may not be killed.” You need to protect me. “And do not ever cut off your loyal love”—*hesed*—“from my family.”

So, why does David do this? What’s his motive? One motive is his loyalty to Jonathan—for the sake of Jonathan, for the sake of the promise of the loyalty and devotion he had to Jonathan. I made a promise to God that I’m going to do this.

## 2. David Had Received *Hesed*: Loyal Grace

Why did David do this and how did David do this? The second answer to that is that David received *hesed*. He received this loyal gift, this loyal grace, from God. If you look closely at a literal translation of 2 Samuel 9, you’ll see that the very first word is “then.” “And then David” did this display of *hesed*.

Chapter 7, chapter 8, and then chapter 9 ... sure, thanks for counting. But in chapter 7 David goes to the Lord and says, *I want to build You a house. I want to build You a temple in Jerusalem.* God says, *I’m not going to let you do that. But I love your heart.* And then God makes a covenant to David of loyal *hesed*. He says, *David, I’m going to build you a house. And I swear by my own name that an unconditional promise, the great Messiah, the King of all Kings, the Eternal King who rules the universe and all of creation, will come as one of your descendants.*

David is granted the gift of great honor in chapter 7. And then in chapter 8 we’re going to read a story where he defeats a lot of the enemies around him, and God gives him blessing and wealth. And it says in verse 13 of chapter 8, “So David made a name for himself, having returned after defeating the Arameans.”

And so, David receives this loyal grace of honor in chapter 7, and then he receives this loyal grace of prosperity in chapter 8.

Then chapter 9. “Is there anyone to whom I might bring kindness for the sake of Jonathan?” We’re looking into the heart of David and it’s giving us a picture of what it’s like to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to become like Christ in this part of your life, where you have been blessed by God with honor, with income. And then, *How can I bless other people around me?* That’s what we do. That’s how we respond.

In chapter 7, David responds in worship. In chapter 8, David responds. In chapter 9, three times “Go find me ...”, “Go find me ...”, “Go find me someone, anyone, that I might give extravagantly to him. I’ve got gifts to give—honor, prosperity. I want to share.”

And here’s the thing. He’s not doing this out of obligation. David’s motive is not guilt. David can’t contain an overflow of what he’s received from God. That’s that power of *hesed* transforming him. And so, David gets that in chapters 7 and 8. Then in chapter 9: “Find me ... go get ... I’ve got to find somebody ... anybody... who I can give this to.”

That’s the theme. That’s what we’re to learn here. We receive the Gospel, and then we become the Gospel in other people’s lives. There’s a beautiful story in the New Testament. One of the versions is in Luke 7. Jesus is dining with a number of religious leaders and it’s all going well, and then a woman crashes into the party uninvited, falls on the ground (they were reclining at the table—that’s how it worked back then), and she’s falling at the feet of Jesus, and she starts weeping. And those tears are washing His feet. And then she dries them with her hair—the dirtiest part of His body she is washing with her hair. And then she has an alabaster full of perfume and lets that loose. And everybody is wondering what is happening. And some of the people say, “Does Jesus know who she is? Does Jesus know what her reputation is? She’s a dead dog.” They don’t know what to do. They haven’t seen anything like this.

Jesus’ attitude is, “I get this a lot.” Of course, Jesus gets this a lot. Because Jesus is giving *hesed*, loyal gifts, to people, altering their lives. Jesus tells the people in the room who are asking, “Why is this happening?” with “Those who have much forgiven love much.” Those who have received much *hesed* overflow with *hesed*. Those who have been given the honor of being the child of God want to give that to other people. Those who have received gifts from God want to give those gifts away.

2 Samuel 9 is a portrait of the heart of Jesus. And it’s a picture of our own salvation. It’s a beautiful chapter.

### Application for Christmas

What does this have to do with Christmas? Look at the decorations. Why are we talking about this now? Because 2 Samuel 9 is Christmas. That’s what Christmas is about. Look at the details. Might I remind you?



## 2 Samuel 9:13

**So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and ate at David's table like one of the king's sons ... and Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet.**

Look at verse 13, the last thing in this story. “Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem”—and this is the conclusion—“And he ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet.”

Who is this biographer? I mean, this is the third week in a row that we've seen this, where the story is coming to an end and then the last thing the biographer writes is the worst part of the story. Does he know we're Americans? This is just how you end—“happily ever after.” And he ends again with this zinger—“and he's lame in both feet.” I think we were aware of that. He made it obvious at the beginning and the end of the Mephibosheth storyline.

### **Why Does the Author Remind of Mephibosheth's Lameness?**

Three things are brought to our attention because of this sentence. His being lame in both feet is the key to really grasping the depth of this expression of covenant love, of a grace covenant.

#### **1. Unconditional, Loyal Love**

The first three things that we can enjoy in the mention of his feet being broken, him being disabled, is that this loyal love is unconditional. He says two times, “Is there anyone?” David doesn't say, “Is there anyone worthy to receive this?” As a matter of fact, Ziba comes back and says, *Yeah, there's this one guy, but he's disabled, so you don't have to do anything.* Mephibosheth himself says that he's nothing more than a dead dog. This man brings nothing to this relationship but hardship. Know that.

And think of the contrast that this unconditional relationship he has with Mephibosheth. In light of the people who David is surrounded by—you'll see this in the rest of 2 Samuel—you'll see this list of people on David's cabinet, his advisers—we talked last week about his mighty men, the thirty-seven warriors that are around him. Those are maybe exclusively the only people that spend time with David in Jerusalem or, certainly, in the palace. And then the dinner

bell rings and people carry in Mephibosheth, and he sits at the table like one of the king's own sons. And David says, "Well, tell me about your day" ... granting him that kind of honor.

Because it's unconditional. It's covenant grace. Grace means gift. It always means gift. It's always meant a gift. It means that if you try to pay for the gift, it's not a gift anymore. It means that the person who's receiving it doesn't do anything. The person who is receiving it just receives it. That's it. It's a picture of salvation. We just receive it. It's unconditional and it's unmerited. It's to anyone.

The Christmas gift is that way. "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that if anyone"---anyone? Anyone. It's unmerited. If anyone would believe in Him they would receive eternal life. We receive that from God so that we can give that same kind of overflow to other people. We give our *hesed* away to unmerited people. It's loyal and committed. You can count on this type of gift of grace—not because they earned it, but because they didn't earn it. That's the whole point. It's unmerited. Anyone and everyone.

## 2. Extravagant, Loyal Love

Second attribute of *hesed* that we can see--because of the fact we keep hearing about, that he is lame in both feet—is this is an extravagant gift. It's lavish with both wealth and honor, in ways that we unspeakable that we can't even grasp. And so it is with God, that we receive from God that kind of lavish, extravagant gift of *hesed*. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life." Yeah, let's call that lavish, extravagant. Those are good pictures of what *hesed* is, so that we could give that away. We can be that kind of generous, that kind of extravagant, that kind of overflowing to other people.

Considering this message this week, I thought and spent some time on this. I have never regretted giving too much. I've never regretted a moment when I was overly generous and wanted to take some of that back. There have been some very exciting times in our financial life. I'm not suggesting that we could afford to give sometimes, but we did. But in retrospect, I'm so glad. Because it was overflowing. "Lame in both feet" is important for us to know. The author wants to end with that because it shows that's it unconditional love. It's an unconditional covenant of grace that is lavish and extravagant.

### 3. Personal, Loyal Love

And the third one is that it's very personal. It's very personal. David takes a perfect stranger—he doesn't know Mephibosheth even exists. And a few sentences later he is dining at the king's table always. He has adopted him.

And by the way, he's dining at the king's table. That phrase that shows that they're eating together is biblical. Food is theological. The idea of sharing fellowship is one of the greatest expressions of honor. In the Bible it's a picture of honoring one another. It's connecting. It's enjoying each other. And so, this is an extension of this blessing here. David is saying, *I'm with you, you're with me, we're together*. The power of dining together—you need to see this as a theological consequence. Jesus converts a dishonorable tax collector by just inviting himself into his house. And that honor has never been experienced. Again, he gave *hesed* to him and he doesn't know what to do with it, and he ends up becoming a follower of Christ and repaying any money he might have taken in his tax collecting that was unethical.

In the Old Testament when you read the stories of Leviticus and all the rules about offerings and sacrifices, read carefully. Some of those offerings are burned up completely. Others are burned up just a little bit. When you put beef or lamb on a fire for a little bit, we have a word for that. Yeah, it's a barbecue. There's a meal that follows these sacrifices. Everybody has now dealt with their sins and now they get to have a big barbecue together. How do you like the Old Testament now? Not so bad.

Jesus is compelled. He says, *I deeply desire to really connect with the disciples*. So, He says, "Go and prepare a meal. I deeply desire to share Passover with you."

In church today, what do we call a bunch of people at church getting a potluck together and enjoying the time. What do we call that? What's the word? Come on, you Baptists. Fellowship—yeah. We don't call it a gorging. *Let's have a fellowship together*. Try a fellowship without food. Not so fellowship-y.

The story of history coming to a culmination—what's the picture in Revelation? A wedding banquet where we're all dining and enjoying a banquet feast together. Why? Because that's what *hesed* is. It's this unlimited, lavish, unmerited I-will-dine-with-the-king-forever gift. That's how Revelation ends. In Revelation there's an invitation in chapter 3, verse 20. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens that door, I will come into him and I will dine with him." He wants to connect. He wants fellowship. That's what is

happening here. We get to enjoy that fellowship with God. We receive that from the Lord, so that ... so that ... so that ... we can do that with other people. Appreciate the power of meals together. Maybe take someone to lunch today who is visiting the church or someone you haven't seen in a while. Enjoy a meal together. Accept them into your fold. That's the point. We receive this, we overflow with it, and we give it out. We've experienced the Gospel so we are part of the Gospel now.

### **Application #1: What Is Your Relationship with God Based On?**

There are a couple of applications that somewhat obvious, I think, when you look at this passage in 2 Samuel 9. One is: what is your relationship with God based on? Is it based on *hesed*, the loyal covenant promise from God to gift you with salvation? Real salvation, biblical salvation, is by grace alone, which means by a gift alone. It's our faith only in that gift only, that Jesus' death was adequate to pay the price for our sins, and His resurrection proved that fact. Is your relationship with God based upon *hesed alone*? That's what the Bible says it's supposed to be based on.

### **Application #2: What Are You Doing with the Overflow of *Hesed* in Your Life?**

And a second application is pretty obvious too. Those of us who have already received that gift of grace, what are you doing with all that overflow? What are you doing with all the extra loyal love and covenant grace? There are ministry opportunities all around us if we just open our eyes. They're there. And I know this to be a fact, because Jesus says in Ephesians that "We are God's workmanship, created for good works to do in Jesus Christ. And those good works were planned for us even before the beginning of time." Maybe it's time that we shared our *hesed* with someone who is undeserving and with no merit, maybe a family member who has been estranged or a neighbor or someone. And let's do it in a lavishing way. Let's bring them into our fellowship. We received this Gospel; we need to become the Gospel.

This story in 2 Samuel 9 is a Christmas story, because each and every one of us started the story as a dead dog. We are Mephibosheth. It says in Romans, "While we yet enemies of God ..." It says in Romans, "While we were still helpless ..." "God so loved the world He sent His only Son so that anyone who would believe in Him would receive salvation." And what would we receive in that salvation from Christ? Unconditional, lavish, extravagant gifts of personal

communion. And our lives are changed because of the power of *hesed*. *Hesed* changes our soul. It changes our very identity. Look around, everyone. You are in the presence of princes and princesses because of the *hesed* of God. And we will dine with the King of Kings always.

What a beautiful Christmas story. Let's celebrate with a word of prayer.

*It is no wonder, Lord, that we pray that You have come and You are the only hope for all of mankind; that You are sent to be Messiah, King of our lives. We are so grateful for this picture in 2 Samuel in which we can see ourselves as words can't grasp, and where You've taken us from and what You've taken us to, that we might be adopted as Your sons and daughters, that we might dine in Your throne room.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You would help us. Would You give us a vision for the people who You have brought into our lives, that we might overflow this loyal gift into their lives, that we might be able to unconditionally love the people who You have brought to us in extravagant ways; that we'd make it very personable; that we would touch lives the way Mephibosheth was touched by David, because You touched David first? Make us a church that's known for its grace, its grace covenant, a grace covenant church; that we would express that in our actions and in our love for one another and in our love for those outside of this church.*

*We look forward to the day when we see You again and have that meal together. And until then, we'll serve You as our king. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*