FOR JONATHAN’S SAKE

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 9

Last week we talked about the covenant God made with David. This covenant, the Davidic Covenant as it is called, was a promise: God promised David that He would build David a house. If you remember David wanted to build God a house, a temple. But God said, “No, David, I’m going to build YOU a house.” Part of the promise was that God would make David’s name great, and expand David’s kingdom’s borders and give David rest from his enemies – all that’s true and would happen in David’s lifetime – but the biggest part of God’s promise to David came in Ch 7, v 16. God tells David: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne, David, shall be established forever.” That’s what God said to David. And as we unpacked this promise we noted that the fulfillment of it would be in Jesus Christ some 1000 years later. Jesus, the divine Son of God, yes, would also be fully human and a descendant of King David thru both of Jesus’ earthly parent’s lines. The angel speaks the following words to Mary in Luke 1: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and OF His kingdom there will be NO end.” The angel’s message is that King Jesus will reign forever and ever! There is no way that David could have fully understood all aspects of the promise God made to him, but HE BELIEVED GOD. This is exactly what God desires from us – even though we don’t fully comprehend everything He’s promised us, we believe BY FAITH that which we do not understand.

Well the Davidic Covenant is an amazing promise made by a holy and righteous and perfect God to a fallible, sinful, imperfect man. Agreed? I mean, David’s a good king with many outstanding qualities, but he’s by no means a perfect man. I asked the question last week and I’ll ask it again – did David deserve this promise that God made to him? Or was this an act of God’s grace to David? By the way those two things (grace and being deserving) are mutually exclusive. Grace, by its very definition is unmerited favor. It is getting something good, some benefit that’s undeserved. And by definition “deserved” means “rightfully earned because of something done or qualities shown.”

Did David deserve this promise of God? No. Neither did Abram, nor Isaac nor Jacob… notice after Jacob the promised Messiah did not go thru the line of Joseph, the most righteous son, but thru Judah. Why? God’s sovereign choice. God’s grace.

Deserving something implies that we do something to earn it. But this has nothing to do with our intrinsic value to God. Yes, God made us in His image so people are very important, quite valuable to God, the crown jewel of his physical creation. You and I were important enough for God to send Jesus to die for us. But the truth of the matter is that not everybody is going to be saved [though some denominations teach that they will]. Jesus went to the cross and died for us because He loved us and it was all part of God’s wonderful plan of redemption since before creation. But that does not mean that we deserve it. In fact what the Bible teaches that we deserve something else. Romans Ch 5: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly [that’s us]. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die [example that I might give my life for Bob] -- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners [enemies of God], Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood [by his death on the cross], much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.” (Romans 5:6-9). What we deserve is the wrath of God. But instead God shows us mercy and grace. Do we have a part to play in the salvation process? Sure, but the big part is God’s.

All that lays the basic ground work for today’s lesson.

David was a recipient of God’s grace thru a covenant God initiated with him (Ch 7, last week’s lesson). Now David will turn around and show God-like grace to Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, and why? Because of a covenant that David and Jonathan had made with each other years before.

READ 2 Samuel 9:1-3

David remembers the covenant he and Jonathan made – maybe he recalls this because of the covenant God had just made with him. We’re not told for sure, but he asks, “Is there anyone left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness FOR JONATHAN’S SAKE.” The house of Saul for David and his family represented David’s enemies. Saul had tried on many occasions to kill David. Saul’s descendants had stood in David’s way for several years of becoming king of Israel. But now the old has all died out, faded off the scene, and the new has replaced it. It is highly unusual for a new king to show much kindness to the old king’s family especially when the old king’s family had been antagonistic with David’s family. David is going to show kindness, but not because of any love lost for Saul, but because of his promise to Saul’s son, Jonathan.

I need to mention something about that word translated here in v 1 in the ESV as “kindness.” That word in the original Hebrew text is *Hesed* (HEH-sid). Everywhere else that *Hesed* is used in the O.T. it is translated as “steadfast love” or “loyal love.” The KJV word for *Hesed* is lovingkindness. It is an unwavering, unconditional love which originates with God. All that to say this – I think that the translation here in the ESV as “kindness” is a bit weak. David wants to show, not just kindness, but *Hesed*, steadfast love, to the house of Saul – the same kind of love God had showed him, and David wants to do this FOR JONATHAN’S SAKE.

Let me go back and read a few verses from 1 Samuel to show you the depth of this covenant relationship David and Jonathan had with each other.

1 Samuel 18:1-4: “As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul… Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.” Here we see Jonathan, the prince of Israel, future heir to the throne of Saul deferring to David as the future king.

1 Samuel 19:1-2: we read, “And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, ‘Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself.’” Here we see that Jonathan protects David because he loves David. Jonathan is more loyal to David than he is even to his own father.

1 Samuel 20:13-17: Jonathan says to David, “But should it please my father to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my father. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” Here we see Jonathan making a covenant with the house of David. Jonathan makes David swear again by his love for him, for it says that “he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

1 Samuel 23:15-18: “David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, ‘Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.’ And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.”

The purpose for me reading all of this is to show you that what David proposes to do in v 1 of our passage springs out of his covenant relationship with Jonathan years before.

Now, at this point David has never heard of Mephibosheth. We the readers have heard of him. He were introduced to him back in Ch 4. However, in our study of 2 Samuel, we rushed right past him. Ch 4, v 4: “Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.” So that’s how Mephibosheth became lame. It was a horrible accident. The person who had been placed in charge of caring for him when he was 5 years old dropped him as she was fleeing in terror from the advancing Philistines.

When David makes his inquiry the name Ziba comes up because Ziba had formerly been a servant of Saul’s and so he would be knowledgeable of the various members of Saul’s household.

I want you to notice something. Bracketed on both ends of this story about Mephibosheth are statements that describe his physical condition – v 3, “he is crippled in his feet.” The last verse of this chapter says “he was lame in both of his feet.” Remember that. It will become important a bit later.

READ 2 Samuel 9:4-5

So this yet unnamed son of Jonathan (he will be named in v 6) lives with this man Machir (rhymes with “nature”) whom we learn later is a wealthy man. And he is living in a place called Lo-debar (means “no pasture), 10 miles S of the Sea of Galilee, basically a place lacking vegetation located out in the middle of nowhere. So although it’s not abject poverty, the life Jonathan’s son is now living is a far cry from the life he once had in King Saul’s house in Gibeah.

READ 2 Samuel 9:6-8

Mephibosheth offers David the honor and respect due a king. We’re never told in the narrative that Mephibosheth thinks his life is in danger (though that’s possible). He most certainly IS afraid. How do we know this? Because David tells him, “do not fear.” Look, Mephibosheth has just been summoned out of the clear blue to go up to Jerusalem to see the king, a king that years before his grandfather had wanted to kill. This can’t be good! Mephibosheth has no clue as to why he’s being summoned or what’s going to happen to him. These verses give us a window into Mephibosheth’s psyche. He has low self-esteem. He refers to himself as a “dead dog.” After David gets through telling Mephibosheth all that he intends to do for him, Mephibosheth basically responds by saying, “I don’t deserve that! I’m nothing!” This has an impact on David. Later, in Psalm 22, David writes these words expressing similar sentiments of feeling less than human: “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.” But David none of David’s kind actions are because of Mephibosheth nor are they based on what Mephibosheth thinks he deserves or desires. What David is going to do for this nobody named Mephibosheth he’s going to do because of the covenant relationship, the promise that he made to this man’s father, a promise based on David’s loyal, steadfast love for Jonathan.

The same steadfast, loyal love that God showed to David, David is now going to show to Mephibosheth FOR JONATHAN’S SAKE.

READ 2 Samuel 9:9-11a

So Ziba and his 15 sons and 20 servants are charged with caring for the property that rightfully belongs to Mephibosheth (all that had formerly belonged to Saul) and growing the food needed to feed him.

READ 2 Samuel 9:11b

Mephibosheth is being treated like he is one of the king’s own sons. Did he deserve this? No. Why was David treating him so nice? Is it just because he is Jonathan’s only surviving son? No. He’s doing this because of the covenant promise he made with Jonathan, because of the *Hesed*, the loyal love he has for Jonathan. Even though Jonathan has been dead for years now, the promise continues.

Mephibosheth is basically adopted into the king’s household and is called a son of David. And we, who are the redeemed, saved, we are adopted into the family of God and are called children of God… “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” (Rom 8:17)

READ 2 Samuel 9:12

This indicates Mephibosheth’s age. He was old enough to have a son so probably he is a young adult. Mephibosheth was 5 years old when he became lame. Here we are 20 or so years later and he is still lame.

READ 2 Samuel 9:13

David is the king. And David, because of his loyal love for Jonathan can do a lot of things for Mephibosheth. He gives him a nice place to live and feeds him well and offers him all the benefits due a king’s son. But there is one thing David cannot do for Mephibosheth. He cannot heal him. Mephibosheth is still lame.

Application: this is where the analogy between God’s covenant love for us and David’s covenant love for Jonathan ends. You see, God not only gives us all the benefits due a child of the King, but He also heals us. He takes broken, sinful, despairing, hopeless, drifting people and transforms them into brand new creations in Christ. As recipients of God’s amazing grace we are changed, spiritually for sure, but also changed in many other ways – our thoughts, our motives, our purpose, all change. We’re not the same people we were when we were first saved.

I’m humbled every time I think about what God did for me.

Thoughts about the song we are going to sing along with – “Why Me, Lord?”