THE BEAUTY OF GOD’S GRACE

2 Samuel 9

By

Steven J. Cole

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Lessons from David: 9

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

I want to talk about the most important concept in the whole Bible. That's quite a claim, isn't it? But without grasping this concept, you cannot be right with God, because it is the basis of all God's dealings with us. Without understanding this concept you can't have consistent victory over sin. You will struggle with guilt, you will lack joy, you will lack motivation to serve God, if you do not understand and apply this concept to your walk with God. I am referring to the glorious truth of the grace of God.

God's grace is not some stuffy theological doctrine to be filed away in your set of notes. It is the most practical, beautiful truth in all of God's Word. It ought to be at the core of your daily experience with God. We cannot begin even to scratch the surface of the subject today, but I want to motivate you to begin a lifelong pursuit of understanding and applying God's grace. You will be richly rewarded.

I need to warn you that Satan works overtime to confuse people on this essential truth. Some turn the grace of God into licentiousness (Jude 4). If you speak of the need for obedience, they cry, "Legalism!" But they don't understand the true grace of God that instructs us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires" (Titus 2:11-12). Others give lip service to grace but live under the strangle hold of legalism. Their lives deny the joy that comes from knowing God's grace.

The doctrine of God's grace is expounded at length in such New Testament epistles as Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. But who would expect to find it shining forth from the pages of 2 Samuel 9? David, the man after God's heart, knew and applied God's grace in his life. Because David was a type of Christ, his showing God's kindness (9:3) to the crippled Mephibosheth serves as an illustration of God's grace to fallen sinners as spelled out clearly in the New Testament.
This incident occurs about half way through David’s reign. The story is tucked between two accounts of battles which David fought, and so it sparkles all the more by way of contrast. David was reflecting on his dear friend Jonathan, who had been killed in battle along with his father Saul about 20 years previously. “Then David said, ‘Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’” (9:1).

The word “kindness” (9:1, 3, 7) is the key to this chapter. It is the Hebrew word chesed, often translated “lovingkindness.” It points to God’s loyal, unfailing love for His people. It’s related to chasidah, the Hebrew word for “stork.” Perhaps you’ve wondered why we associate storks and babies. It comes from the Hebrews, who observed the exceptional love and care which the stork demonstrated toward its young. It would make its nest in the tallest fir trees, safe from its enemies. It would nurture and care for those ugly, gawking baby storks with an unfailing, loyal love. The Hebrews said, “That’s how God loves us!” There is nothing in us to merit or deserve it. Grace stems from God’s nature.

You will notice that David said, “Is there not yet anyone?” Not, “anyone qualified”; not, “anyone worthy?”; just, “anyone?” When Ziba informed David, perhaps with a twinge of warning in his voice, “(he) is crippled in both feet,” David didn’t ask, “How badly is he crippled?” David didn’t think, “He would be useless to have around here.” Instead, he asked, “Where is he?” and he sent for him. Grace doesn’t depend on the recipient. Grace is God’s unmerited favor.

There are three things about God’s grace that are illustrated in the story of Mephibosheth:

Grace seeks us where we’re at, brings us to the King’s presence, and keeps us for the King’s return.

1. Grace seeks us where we’re at.

God’s grace initiates the relationship. He does not wait around for us to come to Him. In fact, we cannot and do not come to God in and of ourselves. God seeks us out and finds us where we’re at. As C. S. Lewis put it,
I never had the experience of looking for God. It was the other way round: He was the hunter (or so it seemed to me) and I was the deer. He stalked me ... took unerring aim, and fired. And I am very thankful that this is how the first (conscious) meeting occurred. It forearms one against subsequent fears that the whole thing was only wish fulfillment. Something one didn’t wish for can hardly be that. (Christian Reflections, p. 169.)

David sought out Mephibosheth. This cripple deserved nothing and was not seeking David’s favor. He hadn’t turned in an application to be considered for a position in the palace. In fact, he was in hiding when the king found him. Notice three things about where God found us, as illustrated in this story:

A. We were fallen in sin.

Twice we are told that Mephibosheth was lame in both feet (9:3, 13). When Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan, and grandfather, Saul, were killed in battle, his nurse realized that five-year-old Mephibosheth was the heir to the throne and his life was in danger. The common custom of eastern monarchs in that day was to eliminate all rivals to the throne. So she grabbed the boy in her arms and ran in panic. He fell and, I would surmise, broke both of his ankles. Without modern medicine to set the bones properly, he was left a cripple for life.

The spiritual parallel is obvious. Just as Mephibosheth once walked with his father, so man originally walked with God. But sin came and man suffered a fall which left him as a permanent spiritual cripple, alienated from God. We are born with a nature that separates us from God and prevents us from coming to God (“dead in your trespasses and sins,” Eph. 2:1). That is the condition in which we were when God sought us out with His great love: fallen in sin, permanently damaged by that fall.

By the way, notice that Mephibosheth was not super-naturally healed of his lameness even though he lived in David’s presence in the palace. Every time he clonked along on his crutches in the splendor of the palace, Mephibosheth must have thought, “Grace, grace, grace!” Even though God has saved us and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, He has not eradicated our old sin nature.
Every time we struggle against the lusts of the flesh, we ought to be reminded, “Grace, grace! It was God’s grace that sought me when I was fallen in sin. Right now I am just a spiritual cripple, but I’m living in the palace of the king, thanks to His grace.”

B. We were far from God.

David asks, “Where is he?” (9:4). Ziba says, “He is in Lo-debar.” We could paraphrase, “He is out in the tules.” Lo-debar was an obscure village quite a ways north of Jerusalem and on the other side of the Jordan River. Mephibosheth knew that by virtue of his lineage, he could be put to death by King David, and so he was living in quiet obscurity out in Lo-debar.

That’s where we were when God found us. Due to our lineage from our father, Adam, we were deserving of God’s condemnation and judgment. And so we just quietly blocked God out of our lives and moved as far away from His presence as we could get, hoping that He would not come looking. But He did!

And that leads to the third aspect of our condition when God sought us out: We were fallen in sin; we were far from God.

C. We were fearful of God.

Can you imagine what Mephibosheth must have thought when the king’s messengers knocked on his door and said, “Come with us. King David wants to see you at the palace!” Verses 6 & 7 show us what he thought: he was afraid! He thought he would be executed.

Fear is the response of any sinner who is aware of his sin and who knows anything of God’s holiness. In our day we are in danger of portraying God as so syrupy sweet that we remove all fear of judgment from the hearts of sinners. If you do not know Christ as Savior, you have much to fear in the presence of God. You should be afraid of death. I once heard Norman Vincent Peale tell his radio audience, “You do not need to fear death. Death is peaceful, like going to sleep.” That is a lie straight from hell! If you are outside of Christ, you face the “terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27)! You rightly ought to be afraid, until you understand what God’s grace is all about.
God’s grace seeks us where we’re at: Fallen in sin, far from God, and fearful of God. Then what does grace do? Does God seek us out to condemn us? No!

2 Grace bring us to the King’s presence.

Mephibosheth’s affliction was a blessing in disguise. If he had not been crippled, he might have tried to challenge David for the throne or to escape from the king’s messengers. But being crippled, there wasn’t much he could do except go along with them. It is those who recognize their needy spiritual condition who respond to God’s grace. Those who think that they are spiritually well often rebel or resist. But Mephibosheth came. And did he find judgment? No! He found the A, B, C’s of grace—Acceptance, Blessing, and Communion.

A. Grace brings acceptance in the Beloved.

Note 9:7: “Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, ...” David and Jonathan had made a covenant with one another (1 Sam. 20:13-17). Mephibosheth found that he was accepted by David because of David’s beloved friend, Jonathan.

Even so, God the Father made a covenant with His beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ. For His sake, He shows us kindness. Paul wrote that God “predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:5-6). God accepts us, crippled feet and all, because of His beloved Son.

Before I met Marla, I’m sure that if my parents had met her, they would have thought that she was a nice girl, but they wouldn’t have had any reason to accept her as a daughter. But when she became the bride of their son, they immediately accepted her as their own daughter. Even so, because of our relationship with His Son, God accepts us into His family. Someone has pointed out that when Mephibosheth sat at David’s table, the tablecloth covered his feet. That may be reading a 20th century western custom into Bible times. But it still makes the point, doesn’t it! As we sit at the Lord’s Table, the blood of Christ covers our crippled feet!
That’s the “A” of grace: Acceptance in the Beloved. Now the “B”:

B. Grace brings blessings beyond all measure.

Note 9:7, “I ... will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul ...” (see also, 9:9-10). Why does it mention (9:10) how many sons and servants Ziba had? The answer is in 9:12: They all were servants to Mephibosheth! Grace upon grace, super-abundant and overflowing!

The English preacher Rowland Hill once received 100 pounds from a generous man to pass on to a poor minister. Thinking it might be too much to send all at once, Mr. Hill forwarded five pounds along with a note that said, “More to follow.” In a few days, he sent another five pounds with the same note, “More to follow.” Later a third, fourth, fifth, and more gifts were sent with the same message: “More to follow.” The overjoyed preacher soon became familiar with those encouraging words and his heart was filled with gratitude to God each time he read them.

God’s grace toward us is like that—more to follow:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness ...” (2 Pet. 2, 3).

God’s grace does not withhold any blessing that would be for our benefit. “No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11).

“A” = acceptance; “B” = blessing; “C”:

C. Grace brings communion with the King and His children.
Mephibosheth ate regularly at the king’s table. In case you missed it, it’s stated four times: 9:7, 10, 11, 13. Can you imagine what that must have been like for Mephibosheth? He was a cripple living in obscurity at Lo-debar, where the most exciting thing to do was to sit around watching tumbleweeds blow. He is brought to the capital city of Jerusalem where he ate all of his meals at the same table as the most powerful monarch in the world, sharing life with the royal family.

Even so, God has called us into fellowship with Himself and with His Son. He has made us members of His family where we share together the bounty of His table. His grace has brought us into sweet, daily communion with the King of Kings and His children.

Thus, Grace seeks us where we’re at; Grace brings us to the King’s presence.

3. Grace keeps us for the King’s return.

To see this point, we must turn to the sequel (19:24-30). At this point, David’s son Absalom has rebelled, and David was forced to flee Jerusalem. Mephibosheth had planned to go along, but Ziba deceived him and left without him. He then lied by telling David that Mephibosheth was hoping for the kingdom to be restored to him (16:1-4). David hastily gave Mephibosheth’s land to Ziba. Now David has returned and Mephibosheth goes to meet him (read 19:24-30).

This part of the story illustrates the believer, who has received God’s grace, waiting faithfully for the return of the King. Mephibosheth’s appearance and his words demonstrate his response to David’s kindness and reveal how God’s grace keeps us for the return of Christ.

A. Grace keeps us living loyally in His absence.

Mephibosheth adopted the appearance of a mourner. A usurper was on the throne, and Mephibosheth could not enter into the frivolity of Absalom’s court while David was in rejection. Mephibosheth’s heart was loyal to David, and his lifestyle reflected it.

Right now, our King is absent from this earth. A usurper, the ruler of this world, is temporarily on the throne. But the day is
coming when the usurper will be put down and Christ will return to rule. In His absence, the fact that we have received His grace should cause us to live apart from the things of this world. It must grieve our Lord when those upon whom He has poured out His grace live for worldly pleasures as if the King were not returning.

B. Grace keeps us living longingly for His presence.

When David realized his mistake in giving Ziba the land, he says, “You and Ziba shall divide the land” (19:29). Scholars are not sure whether this means that David restored the original agreement, with Mephibosheth owning and Ziba working the land; or, whether David wasn’t sure who was right and divided things evenly. Or, David may have been testing Mephibosheth, even as King Solomon later tested the two women claiming the same baby. The important thing is to note Mephibosheth’s response (19:30): He “said to the king, ‘Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house.’” He didn’t want the land; he wanted the person of the one who had shown him such kindness.

Many years ago, Shah Abbis reigned in Persia. He deeply loved his people. To understand them and their needs, he would mingle with them in various disguises. One day he went as a poor man to the public baths where he sat with the common man who tended the furnace. He talked with him and shared his common food. In the weeks that followed he returned often, so that the man grew to love him as a dear friend.

Then one day the Shah revealed his true identity. The Shah waited, expecting the poor man to ask for some expensive gift. But the man just sat there, gazing in awe. Finally, he spoke: “You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this humble place, to partake of my common food, to care about me. On others you may bestow great riches; but to me you have given a much greater gift--yourself. Please, your majesty, never withdraw the priceless gift of your friendship.”

Are you after God for His gifts or for the joy of knowing God Himself? God’s grace should make us long for Christ’s return, when we will see Him face to face. The King himself is our delight.
**Conclusion**

In 1981, California police staged an intensive search for a stolen car and its driver. They even placed announcements on radio stations in their attempt to contact the thief. On the front seat of the car sat a box of crackers that, unknown to the thief, were laced with poison. The car owner had intended to use them as rat killer. But now the police and car owner were more interested in apprehending the thief to save his life than to recover the car.

Like that thief, many people run from God, thinking that He is after them to punish them for the wrongs they've done. But God is after you so that He can show you His grace and kindness. His Son, Jesus Christ, bore the penalty for your sins. If you do not receive His grace now, you will face His judgment in the future. But today is the day of salvation.

Perhaps you have trusted Christ as Savior, but you have forgotten His grace. You have been trying to earn His favor instead of realizing that His grace has provided all. Perhaps you have forgotten His grace and have drifted into the world. His grace is seeking you, to bring you back to His presence and to keep you for His return.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Is God's grace the most important concept in the Bible? Why/why not?

2. Agree/disagree: Emphasizing grace will lead to licentious living.

3. Discuss: American Christianity overemphasizes the love of God to the neglect of His judgment.

4. How can a Christian know which activities are “worldly” and which are okay for God's people?

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