

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MEPHIBOSHETH

“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” (II Samuel 9:7).

THE above words are the gist of one of the greatest stories of grace found in the Old Testament. They are the words spoken by king David to one who had no claim whatsoever to the favor of the king.

The story of the hatred of Saul toward David is too well known to need repeating. The story of the beautiful friendship between Saul’s son Jonathan and David is equally well known.

One day, while fighting the Philistines on the battlefield of Gilboa, both Saul and Jonathan fell. Later David took the throne of Israel. One day he sent out the question, **“Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”** (II Samuel 9:1).

Mephibosheth was the remaining one. It would be well for the reader to stop and read all of II Samuel 9 to get the entire setting of this beautiful scene which so vividly pictures the grace of God, and might well be called the “Good Samaritan” chapter of the Old Testament.

I, Mephibosheth Was Lame

“And Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son who 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” (II Samuel 4:4).

Most accident insurance policies recognize the fact that the loss of the use of both feet constitutes permanent disability. Mephibosheth was a permanent cripple. But note further—he received this fall at the hands of another.

It needs no anointing of the eyes to see that every member of Adam’s race is pictured here.

Back yonder at the fountain-head of the race all men had a fall, for it is written in Romans 5:12, **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”** Adam drew down into his ruin all the old creation of which he was head.

II. Mephibosheth Was Sought by David

It was not a matter of Mephibosheth seeking David. No doubt it never entered his mind to do so. Perhaps he was afraid of David and hoped to stay in utter seclusion.

The first question recorded in divine revelation as being asked by God is, **“Where art thou?”** as He sought the sinning pair in the garden. This principle runs entirely through the Word of God and differentiates Christianity from all religions of the world.

- In religion, man has to seek the favor of his gods
- In Christianity God always seeks to bring an unmerited favor to man.

The Chinaman gave a good definition of the difference when he said, “Chinaman in deep well—Confucius say, ‘Chinaman, climb out, Confucius help you.’ Chinaman could no climb out. Christ climb down and lift Chinaman out.”

You will note also that David did all of this for Jonathan’s sake. Because of the work of Christ, the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to woo and win men to Himself.

III. Where Mephibosheth Was Found

“Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar” (II Samuel 9:4).

Proper names, especially in the Old Testament, are full of meaning and should be carefully studied. Machir means *sold*, while Lodebar means *no pasture*. What is the condition of man, and where is he living? He is sold under sin and in the bondage of the most vicious taskmaster known. The Lord described this taskmaster when He said, **“Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him”** (Luke 12:5).

Man is living in the place of no pasture. Some time ago the entire world was shocked by the death of hundreds in a terrible holocaust in a Boston night club. Why were these throngs caught in this firetrap? They were seeking pasture where none was found. How different is the song of David, **“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.”**

IV. Mephibosheth Feared David

“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 him, Behold thy servant! 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” (II Samuel 9:6, 7).

These words indicate that Mephibosheth feared David. The devil is the author of most fear.

“I was afraid” are the first recorded words of man after the fall. After many years of blessings at the hands of Joseph, his brethren still feared him, as recorded in Genesis 50:15. The devil uses fear to keep people from God. They fear what their evil companions will say; they fear that God will ask them to go somewhere they will not want to go, to do something they will not want to do.

The regions of the doomed and the damned must be peopled with those who were made afraid by Satan.

V. Mephibosheth’s Proper Attitude

“What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (II Samuel 9:8).

Mephibosheth promptly conferred upon himself the title of dead dog. What else, could he do! He was an enemy by birth, crippled by a fall, living in a condition of “bondage” in a land of “no pasture.” He took the attitude of the publican in the temple (Luke 18:13)—the attitude of the prodigal when he started for the father’s house (Luke 15:18).

This attitude is described in the familiar song,

Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

David answered this attitude by declaring that all that pertained to Saul should be Mephibosheth’s, and that he should eat at the king’s table (v. 9, 10).

What a picture of grace! It is true in all the pictures of grace.

- Little did Joseph’s brethren think that they would eat at the king’s table;
- Little did the prodigal think that the father would clothe him and make a banquet for him.
- Few Christians seem ever to meditate upon the glories of the grace of God.

Dear reader, try to fathom the depth of the statement, as recorded in Ephesians 2:7, **“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”**

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.

VI. Mephibosheth Dwelt in Jerusalem

“So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem” (II Samuel 9:13).

Jerusalem means *foundation of peace*. Note the contrast. A few hours before, he was dwelling in the house of Machir (*sold*), in the land of Lodebar (*place of no pasture*). Now he is sitting at the king’s table in Jerusalem (*foundation of peace*).

The first three verses of Ephesians 2 give the awful condition of all unbelievers, and what we were before the grace of God reached us. The fourth verse begins with the words **“But God who is rich in mercy”** and then follows what we are who have believed. When we study the contrast between what we were by nature and what we are by grace, we see that contrast in the life of Mephibosheth was but a dim foreshadowing of God’s grace to us.

VII. Mephibosheth’s Feet Out of Sight

“He did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet” (II Samuel 9:13).

Mephibosheth carried to his grave the evidence of his fall at the hands of another. There was one place where this evidence was not manifest—it was when he was eating at the king’s table. The believer will carry the marks of the fall either to his grave or to the coming of the Lord for His own, but judicially the believer is now seated with Christ in the heavenlies, and robed in the very righteousness of God (Ephesians 2:6; II Corinthians 5:21). We thank God for this Old Testament picture of His grace!

Grace is the sweetest sound
That ever reached our ears;
When conscience charged and justice frowned,
‘Twas grace removed our fears.

‘Tis freedom to the slave,
‘Tis light and liberty;
It takes its terror from the grave,
From death its victory.

Grace is a mine of wealth
Laid open to the poor;
Grace is the sov’ reign spring of health;
‘Tis life for evermore.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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