

2 Samuel 9:1-13

SI: We’re studying the life of King David so we can know Jesus Christ better. David is the greatest of all the Old Testament prototypes of Jesus Christ.

Many of the ways we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior and relate to him are through our understanding of David.

Remember David’s best friend was King Saul’s son, Jonathan.

Even though Jonathan would have inherited the kingdom, he knew David was the Lord’s anointed and he supported him in defiance of his father.

Jonathan had a premonition that he wouldn’t survive his father’s downfall,

so he asked David to promise that if he died, David would be kind to his children.

2 Samuel 9:1-13

Keep your Bibles open.

I want us to read ahead and see what happened to this relationship between

David and Mephibosheth.

Turn to chapter 16, verse 1. David’s son Absalom staged a coup against his father.

He tried to kill him and take the throne, so David had to flee from Jerusalem.

Look who came and found him.

¹ When David had gone a short distance beyond the summit, there was Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, waiting to meet him. He had a string of donkeys saddled and loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred cakes of figs and a skin of wine.

² The king asked Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the desert." ³ The king then asked, "Where is your master's grandson?" Ziba said to him, "He is staying in Jerusalem, because he thinks, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather's kingdom.'" ⁴ Then the king said to Ziba, "All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." "I humbly bow," Ziba said. "May I find favor in your eyes, my lord the king."

Was this true? Did Mephibosheth really think he would somehow get his grandfather Saul’s kingdom back through Absalom’s rebellion?

That doesn’t make sense. Turn to chapter 19, verse 17.

The civil war is over, Absalom has been killed. David returns to Jerusalem.

²⁴ Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. ²⁵ When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?" ²⁶ He said, "My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, 'I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.' But Ziba my servant betrayed me. ²⁷ And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord

the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever pleases you.²⁸ All my grandfather's descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who sat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?"²⁹ The king said to him, "Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the fields."³⁰ Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has arrived home safely."

Notice the narrator gives the last word to Mephibosheth indicating approval of his words and disapproval of David.

INTRO: We don't know who wrote 2 Samuel.

But whoever he was, he was a master at arranging this historical material in order to make certain moral and theological points.

He uses these accounts of David's dealings with Mephibosheth as bookends on either side of David's terrible sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

In chapter 9 we see David before his sin.

He's a kind and generous man.

He's a man who remembers and keeps his promises.

He's a king who is looking out for the welfare of others, especially those who cannot defend themselves, like Mephibosheth.

And he's a perceptive person. You get the sense that he has a read on what kind of man Ziba is and makes very clear what is expected, that he serve Mephibosheth.

Then David falls morally and then we see David dealing with these same people again, Ziba and Mephibosheth, during and after Absalom's rebellion.

But David's not the same person he was.

He's no longer perceptive.

He jumps to conclusions.

The old David would have known something was fishy about Ziba's story that Mephibosheth had betrayed David. He's just too smooth.

And even if in the heat of the moment, when David was running from his life, he made a bad judgment call, what about when the truth comes out?

It's obvious Ziba betrayed and slandered Mephibosheth to get his property.

But David doesn't want to deal with.

His response is impatient and inadequate. Why say more? I've heard enough.

A major injustice has been done but David just wants to be rid of the problem.

If he believed Mephibosheth he should have restored all his property and punished Ziba.

If he wasn't sure who was telling the truth, he should have taken steps to get

to the bottom of things. But David does neither.
He half-heartedly divides the land that he gave away too quickly.
He treats a loyal subject the same as a corrupt, lying subject.
You can't help but compare David's uninterested and irritated lack of concern
with Mephibosheth's humility and dignity.
A grandson of King Saul comes out looking better than King David himself.

There's going to be a lot to say about David's fall in chapter 11 and its aftermath
in the remaining chapters of 2 Samuel.
I told you two Sundays ago when we began this study of the second half of David's
life that the Bible rubs our noses in it.
It compels us to look at the effect of sin in the life of a believer.
I want to use this account to wrestle with one of those troubling effects.
The fact that sometimes real Christians, true believers,
end their walk with God poorly.
They end life not nearly so faithful to the Lord as they were earlier in life.

Our catechism says that sanctification is a work of God's grace that enables us
more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.
That sounds like Christians always get better with age, but we know it isn't so.
In the Bible and in our own observation there are often believers who were
on fire for the Lord and walking with him far more when they were younger.
It was true not just of David, but of a number of the good kings of Judah—
Solomon, Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah.
They were all much more devout and wise as young men than as old men.

The great Scottish pastor Andrew Bonar said very few men and very few ministers
“keep up to the end the edge that was on their spirit at the first.”
They had a sharp edge of faith when young, but it grew dull when they got old.

So what are we to make of this fact? How are we to apply this to our lives?
Two points, I'll give them to you as we go.
(But first, credit where credit is due. Sermon on this by Robert Rayburn.)

MP#1 First, we should take the Bible's exposure of this effect of sin in David's life as a gracious warning

Let me remind you of some of the famous episodes in David's life up to this point.

Remember how before he fought Goliath, when David was a young man, he was so indignant that the Philistines were mocking Israel and the Lord?

That's what motivated him to risk his life in that fight.

Remember how he loved King Saul, even after Saul turned against him and tried to kill him?

There was that time in the cave when his men had the chance to kill Saul but David wouldn't let them. And there was another time when one of David's warriors crept up to Saul when he was sleeping and wanted to kill him, but David said no.

Remember the time David was insulted by Nabal, the wealthy landowner who David had actually been protecting? David got so mad he ordered his men to get their swords. He was going to kill Nabal and all his servants.

But Nabal's wife Abigail talked David out of it by telling him it wouldn't be worth it to have blood on his hands when he finally ascended to the throne.

David agree with her wisdom and called off the attack.

Remember when Saul and his sons were killed in battle by the Philistines?

David wept for them and wrote a sad song in tribute. .

He spoke well even of the man who had tried to kill him.

Remember when Saul's last son Ishbosheth was the final obstacle to David getting the throne of all Israel? But when some men murdered him, hoping to get a reward from David, he put them to death and washed his hands of their evil deed.

Time and again David shows himself to be a man growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord—man with a heart for God and doing what is right.

The way he treats Mephibosheth here in chapter nine is beautiful.

Most kings would have killed Mephibosheth as the son of a rival king.

Even if he was crippled and posed no threat. It just the way things were done.

David gives him a place at his table and a life-long pension.

He's a man full of goodness.

Then he has an affair with the wife of one of his own trusted, loyal warriors and in order to protect his reputation, arranges to have the man killed.

Things were never the same with David or with his kingdom after that.

So what happened? A couple thing.

First, David was about 50 years old. He had 20 years of kingship under his belt.

Twenty years of one success after another as we saw last week.

Enemies defeated to the north, south, east, west.

He had extended the influence of his kingdom all the way to Euphrates River.

He was at the top of his game, everybody admired him, nobody questioned him, nobody challenged him, and he couldn't handle it.

He couldn't handle the temptation of that power and control.

You know the famous quote by Lord Acton:

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

You don't have to be a king or a millionaire for this to happen to you.

Of course the more power and control you have, and the fewer people you have to answer to, the greater the temptation.

In a sense, David gives us an extreme example.

But he illustrates the point that often times, in later life,

because of the success God has given you, because of what you've been able to build, because of the level of comfort you've achieved and insulation from problems of life—you make room for sins that pull you down spiritually.

And it doesn't have to be a heinous, extreme sin like David's.

It could be a respectable sin.

Listen to this quote from Charles Spurgeon about successful pastors.

A [minister] who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly and this promotes his advancement among men.

So a young man goes into the ministry. God has given him gifts. He's bold.

People admire him. His church grows. Spurgeon asks:

What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately faithful a man of God compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified and even commended . . . in truth, he has gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life is now upon the wrong side.

He squanders the latter years of his pastoral ministry because he got successful and comfortable and then protected his position by compromising his message, or by avoiding difficult pastoral work and conversations and justifying it.

Success, comfort, wealth—the power and control and lack of accountability that comes with it, frequently leads to the downfall of Christians in later life

And there's something else with David.

He had a lifelong weakness for women that he never dealt with.

You see that in his multiple wives and concubines and the subtle criticism and warning in the biblical narrative. We're given hints this won't end well. Sometimes a Christian will have a sin that starts when he is young and it goes on for years and he refuses to repent of it and try to change. God gives him plenty of time to change, even continues to bless his life. But finally, in the latter years of his life, the chickens come home to roost.

I know a former PCA minister who didn't treat his wife with love and respect. He tongue lashed her, he was indifferent to her for all the years they were raising children and building his church and pastoral ministry. But finally she had enough and left him. Maybe she shouldn't have. Maybe she didn't have biblical grounds for divorce. But the fact is he asked for it. And he suddenly had to face a future he never imagined. The latter years of his life with a broken family and a pastoral career ended. And no way to mend things because he had squandered all years change possible.

We believe in the grace of God in this church. We believe in God's full and free forgiveness of sins. David received the Lord's full forgiveness, and as we saw two weeks ago, the God's final word on David's life is that he is a righteous man. The Lord in his grace accepted David's good works and his love for God as the final assessment of his life. And God will do the same for you. There's nothing more hopeful in the Bible than that.

But, I would not be preaching the Bible faithfully if I didn't warn you that sin pays a wage, even in the Christian's life. Christians reap what they sow, even as they live under God's grace. Let's not fail to take this warning to heart.

So that's the first faith lesson of David's poor ending.

MP#2 Second, this should deepen our appreciation of God's mercy and forgiveness of us in Christ

One of the perplexing questions about the Christian life is:

Why God doesn't make us perfect right away?

When he justifies us, why doesn't he at that time fully sanctify us too?

He forgives us of our sins. He delivers us from the guilt and power of sin.

So why doesn't he give us total victory right away?

Or why doesn't he at least move us all in a straight, unbroken, upward path to perfect holiness over the course of our lives?

Think what a profound witness the church would be to the world if this were true.

What if all the sons and daughters of God behaved like Jesus Christ?

The power of that mass of good lives would be impossible to deny.

Mahatma Gandhi supposedly said once that he greatly admired the teaching of Jesus and he would have become a Christian if he had known any Christians who perfectly followed Christ's teachings.

So why did God choose to do it this way?

Forgive us, save us, and then allow us to continue to struggle with sin that even leads at times to heinous sins and poor, weak endings?

I'm sure there are many reasons in the sovereign mind of God that we don't know.

But the primary experiential reason is that it magnifies God's mercy to us and his forgiveness in Christ.

If God had justified you and sanctified you completely on the day you were saved, you would never have known, and never believed what a hopeless, undeserving sinner you are.

And you never would have appreciated what a wonderful Savior you have in Jesus.

If the only sins you ever had to consider when thinking about God's grace were the sins you committed before you became a Christian, then over time those would fade in your memory and forgiveness itself would become a little thing.

In the Christian life it's not the first pardon you receive from God that convinces you of how amazing his grace is.

It's your lifetime experience of your sins and his continual forgiveness of your sins that makes his grace amazing.

When a Christian continues to sin against the light, and against God's grace.

And when he sins even though he knows better and knows that what he is doing

is against God's law and God's Spirit.

And when he confesses and asks forgiveness and still does it over and over.

And when he sins in such a way that makes him wonder if he really loves his sins more than he loves God and Christ.

That's when a person comes to realize how deep a sinner he is.

It's when you sin as a Christian that you see how ugly and inexcusable your sins actually are.

And that's when you realize how amazing the grace of God must be to cover them over and over again!

Isn't this what you think when you hear about other Christians falling morally?

If you have any spiritual sensitivity at all, all wise believers say the same thing:

There but for the grace of God go I.

We know very well that we could have done the same thing.

In fact, we may know that we have done the same thing, we just haven't been exposed or caught.

I've been using the term, amazing grace, which makes me think of the hymn,

Amazing Grace. Listen to what John Newton, who wrote that hymn, confessed about his life as a Christian.

The Lord makes some of his children examples and warnings to others as he pleases. They who are spared, and whose worst sins are only known to the Lord and themselves have great reason to be thankful. I certainly am. The merciful Lord has kept me from making any considerable blot in my profession during the time I have been numbered amongst his people. But I have nothing to boast about. It is not because of my wisdom, watchfulness, or spirituality. I hope to go softly all my days under the remembrance of many things for which I have as great a cause to be abased before Him, as if I had sinned grievously in the sight of man.

God, in his mercy, has kept me from great public sins and moral collapse that everybody can see. But I can't boast.

I know the many ways and times I have sinned against God and I know I deserve the same humiliation as those who have their sins dragged out into the open.

So he says: I hope to go softly all my days, remembering that.

It's the realization of this that keeps our pride from swallowing up our faith, and swallowing our love for God and appreciation of the cross.

One more thought.

2 Samuel 9, David finding Mephibosheth and inviting him to his table

and showing kindness to him is not just here to show us how far David fell later, and how his sin negatively affected him.

This wonderful chapter show us what a true and righteous king is like.

He loves and extends grace and generosity to those who are lame and helpless. And isn't that really what we all are morally?

We are all Mephibosheths.

Spiritually lame and useless as dead dogs.

But here is Jesus Christ, King Jesus, and he invites us to eat at his table.