

## **Mephibosheth**

### **Can I Be Restored?**

#### **2 Samuel**

Today I want to examine a story from the Old Testament. The man in this story is a character most people don't know much about. This morning, I want to look at the life of a young man named Mephibosheth. How many of you remember who he was? He was the son of Jonathan and grandson of King Saul.

Now, I'm sure EVERYONE remembers King David. He's the same David who killed Goliath, then grew up to be the 2nd King of Israel. It was while the 1st King --- Saul --- was still in power, that the Prophet Samuel anointed David as God's chosen King. Needless to say, this did not make David popular with King Saul. In fact, trouble developed to the point that David and Saul were on different sides of a civil war.

To complicate matters, Saul's son, Jonathan was David's best friend. In fact, Jonathan and David were so loyal to each other that they made a covenant together. They promised that no matter what happened they would always look after each other's families. The civil war continued until finally both Saul and Jonathan died in a battle at Jezreel.

In the chaotic days that followed, all the descendants of Saul were killed. (This was typical in the regime changes of those days.) But in this case, there was one lone survivor: A young boy named Mephibosheth, who was a son of Jonathan.

We're going to look at the story of Mephibosheth, because this obscure Old Testament Character gives us a picture of God's grace to sinners. It gives us a picture of restoration. II Samuel chapter 4 tells us that after David was firmly established on his Throne, he remembered his promise to Jonathan. He found young Mephibosheth --- the only surviving son of Jonathan --- the grandson of his old enemy Saul --- and he restored Mephibosheth to the Palace of the King.

As we look at the restoration of Mephibosheth, we'll see that his story represents what God has done for each of us. First of all, like Mephibosheth... we have all been crippled by a fall.

<sup>4</sup> *(Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth,<sup>[b]</sup> who was crippled as a child. He was five years old when the report came from Jezreel that Saul and Jonathan had been killed in battle. When the child's nurse heard the news, she picked him up*

*and fled. But as she hurried away, she dropped him, and he became crippled.)* **2 Samuel 4:4 NLT**

Mephibosheth started out at a distinct disadvantage. His well-meaning nurse panicked and --- in her haste to get the boy away from danger --- she dropped him. Because of that, Mephibosheth grew up crippled in both feet. This child would, for the rest of his days, need the help of others in order to get by. He had to live the rest of his life without a father and with a severe disability...whenever he is mentioned in the Bible from then on, his disability is mentioned as well. He was pretty much at the mercy of anyone who came looking for him.

And in much the same way, we are crippled because of the fall of Adam: We are also at a distinct disadvantage because of our propensity to sin.

- Morally speaking – we cannot live up to the perfect standards of God
- Physically speaking we all face pain and sickness and death.
- Spiritually speaking we cannot make ourselves righteous

enough to approach God.

We have the same basic problem Mephibosheth had. He was crippled in both feet. We are crippled when it comes to pleasing God on the basis of our own deeds. Like Mephibosheth, we were all crippled by a fall.

But the good news is that, like Mephibosheth, we were SOUGHT BY THE KING.

*<sup>3</sup> The king then asked him, "Is anyone still alive from Saul's family? If so, I want to show God's kindness to them."*

*Ziba replied, "Yes, one of Jonathan's sons is still alive. He is crippled in both feet." 2 Samuel 9:3 NLT*

Mephibosheth did not search for the King. The King searched for him. He was only 5 years old when he fled the palace. Chances are, he didn't even know David. But David made himself known to Mephibosheth ... just like God has revealed Himself to us.

And King David went out of his way to seek out this lost son. (Fortunately, for Mephibosheth, he sought him out for good.) In very much the same way, Jesus came into the world seeking

those who were not seeking him.

<sup>10</sup> *He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.* <sup>11</sup> *He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.* **John 1:10-11 NLT**

<sup>10</sup> *For the Son of Man<sup>[a]</sup> came to seek and save those who are lost.”* **Luke 19:10 NLT**

*Illustration:*

*It is said that when Henry David Thoreau, the naturalist, was near death, he was visited by a pious aunt who asked him, “Henry, have you made your peace with God?”*

*His reply to her was, “I didn't know that we had ever quarreled.”*

That answer revealed profound spiritual ignorance. Too many people are like him. They are utterly unconscious of the fact that they have sinned against God. They have no idea that they are, in reality, lost and separated from Him. They don't know that the first step in coming to Christ is to realize that they are lost sinners who desperately need to be found and saved.

At least Mephibosheth knew he was officially an enemy of the King. He knew there was nothing he could do to make things right. Unless the King came and sought him out, he was doomed to hide all his life. And like Mephibosheth --- who was sought by the King...we have been found...a long way away.

II Samuel 9:4

<sup>4</sup> *“Where is he?” the king asked.*

*“In Lo-debar,” Ziba told him, “at the home of Makir son of Ammiel.”* 2 Samuel 9:4 NLT

Let's talk about what's going on here...

King David has just finished battling to secure his throne. Saul, the former king and his son Jonathan had been killed by the Philistines. You may remember David killing Goliath or David's anointing by Samuel. He had been brought to the palace to play his harp when Saul would be taken by a fit of madness. And David and Jonathan became good friends. They made a covenant. This covenant would be a reminder of their pledge to look out for each other. As Saul watched the friendship blossom, his madness drove him to seek David's life. David became a fugitive.

But now Saul was dead, and Jonathan with him. In his mourning, David was reminded of the covenant.

Where is he? David discovers that Mephibosheth is in Lo Debar--the howling wilderness, the most decrepit of the Samaritan slums. It was a place where the rejected of society came to live and where the outlaws hide. The boy's name means despised one. Can you see him? People mocking him--this Jewish prince on his crutches.

So David sent for him. His royal guard rode out of the palace, out of the city and into the howling wilderness of Lo Debar. People stuck their heads out the door to watch the horsemen thunder down the street, and the whispers started. Who have they come for this time? Whose life would be forfeit? Who was it that they had come hunting? And the answer followed . . . it's that little crippled boy, Mephibosheth.

The captain of the guard reined in his horse and swung down off his horse. His men kicked in the door of the little hovel. His boots seemed to resound on the hardened dirt floor as he searched the house. Mephibosheth knew it was the end. But it wasn't....

<sup>7</sup> *“Don’t be afraid!” David said. “I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king’s table!”*

<sup>8</sup> *Mephibosheth bowed respectfully and exclaimed, “Who is your servant, that you should show such kindness to a dead dog like me?”* **2 Samuel 9:7-8 NLT**

You see, it wasn’t who he was; it was who his daddy was. It was about a covenant made before Mephibosheth was even a thought in Jonathan’s mind! The church is often like Mephibosheth. The world is full of people telling us to get to the back of the bus. They don’t like the Church because God’s standards set forth in the Bible make them uncomfortable. They want to knock us down and to get us to hide under the table. They say, “You’re nobody! I know what you used to do! I know where you’ve been! And you call yourself a Christian?”

I got news for you. We have a covenant. God didn’t make one with you or me, because He wanted a covenant that would be incorruptible. So He sent his only son to die on a hill called Mt. Calvary. The blood covenant was made before any of us were

even a thought in our parents' minds.

Like him, we are also in a desolate place if we are separated from God: *THE LITERAL MEANING OF LO-DEBAR IS ...A PLACE OF NO PASTURE*. But to that place comes Jesus --- who gives us pasture. He came into our desolate place so that we could have nourishment and life.

God takes the initiative to seek and to find. Remember the parable of the lost sheep. The Good Shepherd left 99 healthy sheep back in the safety of the sheep-fold while he scoured the countryside all night, looking for one wayward lost lamb.

That's how God looks for any lost sinner. And that's how David looked for Mephibosheth. Like Mephibosheth, we were actually **SAVED FOR ANOTHER'S SAKE**.

Remember, David said to him, "Do not fear for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." II Samuel 9:7

David loved Mephibosheth from the very beginning ... not for his

own sake ... not for anything Mephibosheth had done to deserve that love ... but for Jonathan's sake. His love for Jonathan extended through the generations to Jonathan's descendants.

In much the same way, God loves every one of us for His Son's sake. We don't have to earn his love ... we already have His love. God's love was given freely ... given in the name of His son, Jesus.

Now the story of Mephibosheth has a happy ending. And our story, too, can have a happy ending because --- like Mephibosheth --- we can some day be restored...II Samuel 9:10-13

<sup>10</sup> *You and your sons and servants are to farm the land for him to produce food for your master's household.* <sup>[b]</sup> *But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, will eat here at my table...* **2 Samuel 9:10 NLT**

The book of Revelation talks about the great banquet when the bride and the Lamb will be united in Heaven. The church and Jesus Christ will be together at that eternal feast.

How good and important it is to know that the groom will bring the bride to the feast. She will be adorned in white spotless garments provided by the groom. Everything the bride enjoys comes at the expense of the groom.

We are the bride of Christ! Jesus has set a place at HIS banquet table ... and we're invited! Your place at the banquet table was secured at the cost of the blood of the lamb who was slain. He has provided for each of us a place at his table for all eternity.

#### CONCLUSION:

As you think about the story of Mephibosheth, think of it this way: Before we could do anything about it, the devil grabbed us humans and ran off into a far country. In the process, we fell and became permanently crippled.

But, thank God, it is also true that the King has come. He has gone out of his way to seek us out. He has found us in the far country. He wants to adopt us into His family so we can sit at His table forever.

The story of Mephibosheth is a reminder of how God actively

seeks those who are lost and brings them home to his table. That kind of love for the lost sinner deserves a response. In love and gratitude we need to reach back to the one who has already reached out to us.

The Shepherd

by Thelma McDougall

The shepherd has left the ninety and nine  
And gone down after the one,  
Into the darkness of the pit,  
Away from the light of the sun.

Into the tangled wilds of sin,  
Into the chill of despair,  
Into the storms of unbelief  
Into the night time of care.

Give praise, my soul, for his patience rare,  
Give thanks for his love divine!  
For I ... who was once the hundredth sheep,  
Am back with the ninety and nine!

“Why me?” The kindness he had received from the king was overwhelming. His love for him because of the faithfulness and loyalty of his father, Jonathan, was an unexpected, unanticipated joy. He expected the king’s wrath; instead, he got the king’s unconditional love and acceptance. He still was lame- but, he was no longer an orphan, no longer living in fear- for now, he was sitting at the king’s table, as one of his own sons.

Do you think that Mephibosheth ever asked... “Why me?” Have you ever said or thought that? At first, you may have been disappointed by some of life’s tragedies:

- You lost your job, and you are not sure of your prospects for the future
- You were abandoned by family members, and you feel like an orphan
- Serious illness has touched you or someone you love
- Someone that you felt close to has now rejected you
- You have lost your sense of direction and purpose in life
- You experienced the death of a family member, or a close friend
- A gripping fear has overwhelmed you- fear of the future, fear of death, fear of ridicule, fear of suffering.

And, you like Mephibosheth may be asking the Lord, “Why me?”

Perhaps your troubles have made you spiritually lame. You cannot walk in the Lord the way you used to. Your support systems are broken.

And there are some here today who have been in Lo-debar. You've been battling in the howling wilderness, you may even be hiding under the table praying that the problem will pass you by, but God through His Spirit wants to bring you out of the howling wilderness. God wants to pour His blessings out upon us, but we have to choose to come out from under the table.

Don't be afraid, for God will surely show kindness for the sake of His son, Jesus. He will restore that which Satan had plotted to steal from you, and He invites you to feast at His table on the blessings of God. Will you come out from under the table? Are you ready to come out of Lo Debar? Will you allow God to restore you? Will you begin the relationship today that God so desires?