

The act of kindness described in this lesson demonstrates what kind of man that David was, but it is also a beautiful illustration of God's love and kindness toward us. Like Mephibosheth, we can contribute nothing toward our Benefactor for we are as spiritually lame as Mephibosheth was physically. All we can do is thank God for allowing us to sit at His table and for the blessings He has given us.

1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

David is motivated not only by his love for his friend Jonathan, he is also remembering the covenant he had made with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14-17, 42) that was binding between not only David and Jonathan but also their descendants. Three of Saul's sons had died on the battlefield just prior to their father's death (Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchi-shua – 1 Sam. 31:2). A fourth son (Ishbosheth), who had attempted to rule over Israel in his father's place, had been assassinated (2 Sam. 4:5-7). Apparently David was unaware at that time if there were any other surviving male descendants of Saul. It was unusual for a king to show kindness to the descendants of the previous king since the typical practice was to kill all who might have a potential claim to the throne. Instead, David wanted to show kindness toward the house of Saul, not because of any virtue that the person might have, but because of his love for Jonathan and to honor the covenant that had been made between them.

2 And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

“And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba” – Ziba had been a servant of Saul (some commentators believe he may have been steward over Saul's land) and was likely still serving the family in some capacity. He apparently was a man of some stature and wealth since he had fifteen sons and twenty servants (v. 10). David's servants locate Ziba and summon him to appear before David the king with the idea that his familiarity with Saul's family will enable him to answer the king's questions.

“And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he” – David confirms that he is speaking with Ziba, the man who ought to be able to answer his questions about Saul's family.

3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

“And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?” – Apparently David was looking for legitimate descendants to represent Saul's house, since when a later search was made for any sons of Saul, the sons that Saul had fathered with Rizpah, his concubine, were the only ones that were found (2 Sam. 21:8).

“And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet” – It's unclear if Ziba understood David's true intentions, but he seems to have no hesitation in identifying the son of Jonathan, pointing out that this son was a cripple. The lameness was the result of an accident at age 5 when news of Saul and Jonathan's death on the battlefield reached Jonathan's home (2 Sam. 4:4 *“And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that 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”*). Perhaps Ziba mentioned Mephibosheth and not any other descendants of Saul because he had the idea that if David was intending on killing Saul's descendants, the death of a cripple would be no great loss.

4 And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

David immediately wants to know where to find this son of Jonathan and Ziba replies that he is living in the house of Machir. Machir is apparently a wealthy man for he later brings supplies to help David when he is fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:27-29). The fact that Mephibosheth is living under the care of a wealthy man implies that he was poor and unable to support himself because of his lameness.

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. 6 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, Behold thy servant!

“Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar” – David wastes no time and sends messengers to bring Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

“Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence” – When Mephibosheth comes to David, he immediately shows humble reverence to the king. We don't see any hint of defiance or ill will toward David for displacing his family from being the royal family. No doubt the fact that he was suddenly brought to the king has made him concerned about what is going to happen.

“And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!” – When David addresses him by name, Mephibosheth responds in humility and complete surrender. Quite likely he is afraid for his life since he does not yet know David's intentions. This summons may have been a ruse to root out any remaining descendants of Saul that might have a claim on the throne in order to kill them.

7 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.

“And David said unto him, Fear not” – David apparently recognizes Mephibosheth’s fear and wants to assure him that he has no reason to be afraid.

“for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake” – David’s intention is not to kill Mephibosheth, but to show him kindness for the sake of David’s friendship with Jonathan.

“and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father” – In addition to merely showing kindness, David promises to restore to Mephibosheth all of the land that once belonged to Saul, Mephibosheth’s [grand]father. David had taken possession of the land when he became king in Saul’s place (2 Sam. 12:8) and now he is giving it back to Saul’s descendant, Mephibosheth.

“and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” – This promise is significant in two ways: 1) it was an honor to be invited to eat at the king’s table; 2) the fact that Mephibosheth would be able to do this “continually” meant that David would provide for Mephibosheth’s daily needs for the rest of his life. Apparently Machir had been providing for Mephibosheth until this point (v. 4-5), but now David wants to be his provider going forward.

8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Mephibosheth cannot believe his ears and asks why David would want to do this for him, referring to himself as a “dead dog” (a useless rotting carcass). As a cripple, Mephibosheth was unable to support himself since he couldn’t work in the field or do physical labor that would be considered of any value in that day, nor could he be a soldier. Mephibosheth knew that he couldn’t contribute anything worthwhile to earn or repay David for the kindness that was being shown to him. He had no more value than a “dead dog.”

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. 10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

David appears to have ignored Mephibosheth’s question, which was likely rhetorical. Calling for Ziba, David informs him that he is returning Saul’s lands to Mephibosheth, who is now Ziba’s master. Ziba, along with his sons and servants, would work the land and bring the harvest to Mephibosheth. Not only would Mephibosheth have plenty to eat, but he would also become wealthy from the harvest of the land. All of Ziba’s resources would be devoted to serving Mephibosheth, including his 15 sons and 20 servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

“Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do” – Ziba promises to obey all that David has commanded, although his obedience may have been because he had no choice. Later, when David is fleeing from Absalom, Ziba lies by claiming that Mephibosheth had sided with Absalom against David (2 Sam. 16:1-4).

“As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons” – Ziba is given notice that the king will be honoring Mephibosheth as if he were his own son by having him to always eat at his table. David may also be implying that if Ziba doesn’t honor and obey Mephibosheth then David will hear about it since Mephibosheth will see him every day.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

“And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha” – Mephibosheth’s wife and son were likely also allowed to eat at David’s table.

“And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth” – At David’s command, Ziba, his sons, and his servants became the servants of Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

“So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table” – We are not told the location of the land that David gave to Mephibosheth, but Mephibosheth did not dwell there. He stayed at Jerusalem in an expression of gratitude so that he would always be able to eat at the king’s table.

“and was lame on both his feet” – We are reminded that Mephibosheth was a cripple and therefore unable to contribute toward his own support. David had taken him from a place of apparent poverty and gave him a place of honor and provision. David had given him land and servants that could work the land and produce wealth for him. This narrative is a beautiful illustration of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. Christ has lifted us up from a helpless state of poverty and placed us in an eternal place of honor and provision with Him (**Eph. 2:4-7** “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*”).