

What We Can Learn From a Crippled Pauper in King David's Castle

The news spread rapidly. Israel suffered a devastating defeat. King Saul and his son, Jonathan, had been slain in battle by the Philistines. Terrified, a nurse scooped up a 5-year-old prince to whisk him to safety. (It was common in ancient regime changes to execute all the royal family to eliminate any heirs to the throne.) In her haste she stumbled, dropped the boy, breaking both his legs. Consequently, Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was lame the rest of his life. He is a fitting type of the human race—he was of a royal line but crippled by a fall.

Years later, during David's reign as king, he wondered, "Is there still anyone left from the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness on behalf of Jonathan?" (2 Sam. 9:1). He was told Mephibosheth was living like a pauper in an obscure town called *Lodebar*, meaning "without pasture or barren place." That describes our spiritual condition before we met our heavenly king. Life without God is a barren wilderness. Nothing can satisfy the hole in our soul that only He can fill. David, a type of Christ, gave this maimed man four things that God has also given to us:

1. **Unmerited Affection:** David welcomed the lame prince to his palace, "Do not be afraid, for I will certainly show you kindness on account of Jonathan, your father' ... and you will eat at my table perpetually" (2 Sam. 9:7). Years prior, David and Jonathan made a pact to take care of each other's family (1 Sam. 18:1-4). Mephibosheth became the recipient of David's love and favor, which he did absolutely nothing to deserve. Sounds a lot like grace—"For by grace you have been saved through faith,

and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). We are the beneficiaries of the covenant God and Christ made at the cross. We have received divine favor and affection due to the atonement Christ made as our substitute.

2. **Unconditional Acceptance:** "So Mephibosheth ate at the table of David like one of the sons of the king" (2 Sam. 9:11). The name Mephibosheth means "destroying shame." David restored his dignity and accepted him as his own son. He was probably raised to believe David was his enemy rather than a benevolent benefactor. Many people wrongly assume God is their enemy when, in fact, He's the best friend they'll ever have. He's looking for opportunities to bless them. Notice Mephibosheth's response to David's generosity, "What is your servant that you should be concerned for a dead dog like me?" (2 Sam. 9:8). On face value, it sounds like he had low self-esteem, but he was expressing his sense of unworthiness, "I don't belong here, I don't deserve all this kindness."

The truth is, we are all unworthy of God's goodness, but Jesus' blood has made us worthy. God accepts us unconditionally as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way. Society accepts or rejects people based on their appearance, intelligence, money, personality or talent. God accepts us because He created us, we have an eternal soul, Christ died for us as a personal favor and He has an eternal plan for us. When a married couple adopts a child, they tend to choose the healthiest, smartest, prettiest, most well-behaved child. When God adopts, He chooses the neediest child—and that child was you and me.

3. **Unlimited Access:** "So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he ate continually at the table of the king" (2 Sam. 9:13a). This lame prince was granted unlimited

access to the palace. In Old Testament times, access to God was restricted. Only priests could enter the Holy Place in the temple, and only the high priest was allowed in the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple was torn in two, exposing God's presence and granting all believers unlimited access to Him. "But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ ... For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:13, 18). In Christ the unapproachable God is approachable. We've been given a seat at the King's table. Unfortunately, many Christians are dumpster-divers, dining at the tabloid trough of carnality. Eventually, the Prodigal Son got tired of swine feed and decided to return to his father's house. Can you hear the Master calling, "Come and dine"?

4. **Unwavering Allegiance:** Loyalty is tested in the absence of those we love. Absalom's coup against his father's throne forced David to flee Jerusalem for six months. Mephibosheth, tricked by his caregiver, Ziba, was left behind. "Then Mephibosheth the son of Saul went down to meet the king. He had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he came back in peace" (2 Sam. 19:24). No, he was not a slob. He simply lived in self-denial during the king's absence. Ziba slandered him in order to gain more of Saul's inheritance. Finally reunited with David, "Mephibosheth said ... Let him even take everything, since my lord the king has come safely to his house" (2 Sam. 19:30). Loyalty breeds loyalty. The King's kindness should produce an unwavering allegiance in us too—a "You-can-take-this-whole-world-just-give-me-Jesus" mentality.

After David reclaimed his rightful throne, a three-year famine ensued. God allowed it as a penalty for Saul's unjust

brutality against the Gibeonites. When David sought to make amends, the Gibeonites demanded seven descendants of Saul to be hung to satisfy justice. Guess who was eligible? Mephibosheth! “But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul on account of the oath of the Lord that was between them ...” (2 Sam. 21:7). Mephibosheth was spared in a time of judgment. When judgment falls on this prodigal planet, those loyal to Christ will be spared. “For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9).

There are many cripples living in the King’s castle today, including you and me. We were all lame princes and princesses living like paupers. Now, thanks to the cross of Christ and the power of His blood, we have a permanent seat at the King’s table. {eoa}

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