

2 Samuel 8-9 – “The Triumph and Tenderness of David”

As we mentioned last time in our study of 2 Samuel, things are going well for David at this point. The nation is unified under his kingship. Jerusalem has been captured and the ark of the covenant is brought to this new capital of Israel. In our last chapter God made a covenant with David that one of his descendants would occupy his throne forever and his kingdom would have no end. That’s pretty exciting news. Things are definitely going well.

And as we go through the next couple of chapters tonight, we see God’s increasing blessing upon David. And it’s a reminder that every good and perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of Lights (James 1:17).

Two times in chapter 8 we read that the Lord preserved David wherever he went (vv. 6, 14). You see this blessing that David is experiencing is not because David is so special or successful in and of himself, it’s because God is a blessing God. David is not the hero of the story here tonight, God is. And God often blesses His people so they can be a further blessing to others. We’ll see that clearly here tonight as well.

1. David Defeats the Philistines and Moabites – 8:1-2

8:1-2 - *After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines. ² Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought tribute.*

Now it’s interesting that we read in 2 Samuel 7:1 that God had given David *rest from all his enemies all around*. But here we see David continuing to battle against his enemies. It’s very likely that this takes place before the events of chapter 7.

- Either way, whether this flows chronologically or is taking place previously, we know that the enemy never lets up. He is constantly walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Because the enemy does not rest, we should never get complacent in the rest God gives. David, through a period of peace and rest, was strengthened to go out on the offensive and do a greater work for the Lord.
- So too, God may give us periods of rest, like he did David, but they’re never to bring us to a place where we stop looking to move forward. Some equate

rest with not needing to do anything where you can just put your feet up and sip on some margaritas. I'm sure we all like that picture. But may the rest we enjoy in the Lord simply be a pre-requisite for action. David is looking to see how he can take more ground and secure the nation in greater peace.

Metheg Ammah literally means 'Bridle of the Mother City'. This was most likely referring to Gath, which was the chief city of the Philistines. It sat closest to the Israelite border and was sort of like the control center for the Philistines.

- We have to be quick to recognize some of the control centers or headquarters where the enemy has posted in our lives. Certain things can become besetting sins where we feel comfortable with it and think it's not any big deal, I've been battling this for so long and it's still there, and I seem to just keep going. We can easily ignore it, but we need to come against those areas where the enemy has taken root and look to defeat it through the help of God. Never give room for the enemy to remain, bring the stronghold down lest it bring you down.

Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground...

Why did David go after Moab? After all, this was part of his family. His great grandmother Ruth was a Moabite. And then to treat them this way seems almost a little brutal or excessive. Why did David do this?

We're not sure but we know that David once turned to the king of Moab for help in keeping his parents safe.

- **1 Samuel 22:3–4**, *"Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know what God will do for me." 4 So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold."*
- After this we don't hear anything more about his parents.
- It's been written in the Hebrew Midrash (a collection of ancient Jewish interpretations, commentaries, and stories that try to explain and fill in gaps of the Hebrew Bible where details are not written) that the people of Moab put David's parents to death soon after David was crowned king.
- If that's what happened, it would explain David's treatment of these Moabites. We're not sure the reasons, but that's been a possibility.

With everyone on the ground David measured them with a line. Two lines of people were put to death while one line of people was spared. That was seen as

a very benevolent act in this day. In doing this, David eliminated a military threat against Israel but also kept some alive to be servants and pay tribute (taxes) to Israel. This would have shown their allegiance to David and appreciation for him sparing their lives.

2. Further Conquests in the North – 8:3-8

8:3-4 - *David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates. ⁴ David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots.*

Zobah was the region directly north of Damascus. It would be modern day Syria. This was a kingdom that stretched from the eastern slopes of Lebanon and extended northeastward to the River Euphrates.

And David is looking to stretch the borders of Israel territory all the way up to this point. This was the border that God had promised to Abraham.

- **Genesis 15:18**, *"On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—"*
- This is David showing himself to be that man after God's heart in desiring to see Israel walking in the fullness of the promises of God.

Along the way David stockpiled some coveted military goods.

One thousand chariots... You're going to need an extension on the garage for that. And it says, ***seven hundred horsemen***. This same account recorded in 1 Chronicles 18:4 says it was seven thousand horsemen. The number in Chronicles is preferred over Samuel as it stays more consistent with the size of the other factions of the army. Most likely it was a copyist error that caused this difference.

Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses... This would have rendered them unfit for battle. He could have taken them for himself, but God had said in Deuteronomy 17:15-17 that kings were not to multiply for themselves horses. So it seems that David is looking to keep in line with God's Word. Only it also says in the next verse of Deuteronomy 17 that they're not to multiply wives! David is walking in partial obedience.

- It's not enough to just say, well I'm following in obedience a good percentage of the word. We need to follow all of it. For it would be in this small percentage of disobedience that would cause David much grief in his life. And it will be that way for us too if we settle to follow just a part here or there.

8:5-6 - *When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians. ⁶ Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought tribute. So the Lord preserved David wherever he went.*

No matter who tried to stop David, David could not be stopped. When the Syrians were trying to come to the aid of Hadadezer king of Zobah, 22,000 Syrians were wiped out. Now the rest of them are paying tribute to David.

And notice what the key was in all this. The reason David couldn't be stopped wasn't because he was such a good fighter or strategic leader. It was because ***the Lord preserved David wherever he went***. It repeats again in vs. 14 just so you don't miss it. And it's important. Because we're not the hero of our story. We're not the ones to credit when things go well. It's all because of the Lord.

- We have to be careful that when we see success in our lives we don't begin to think we had anything to do with it. Or that God was dependent on us to make it work. It's always the other way around. We are dependent on God. He's the one that preserves us and prospers us. It's all for His glory!

So we see the kingdom of David really expanding. Under David's reign, Israel's borders extended further than they ever had or ever have. They took Philistine controlled areas down in the southwestern part of Israel, they extended east of the Dead Sea in Moab, and up to the far north in Syria and Zobah (we'll see a recap again in vs. 12).

3. David Dedicates Gifts to the Lord – 8:7-12

8:7-12 - *And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ Also from Bethah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze. ⁹ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰ then Toi sent Joram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated*

him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and Joram brought with him articles of silver, articles of gold, and articles of bronze. ¹¹ King David also dedicated these to the Lord, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued—¹² from Syria, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

Toi, king of Hamath, is playing it smart here. He's no doubt seeing or hearing the campaign that David has been on. And instead of falling to defeat, he befriends David. He sends his son Joram with a gift to get on David's good side. Wise move.

David is accumulating a lot of goods. Wealthy goods. Gold shields, bronze, articles of silver, gold and bronze. David could have been rolling in the dough, living the highlife. But notice, he doesn't go out and buy the latest model chariot with all the bells and whistles. He's not putting in a new pool at the palace. He dedicates these items to the Lord. It's believed these items went toward the building of the temple.

- David desired to build God a house, but God said David would not be the one to do it. David could have sat around moping and pouting. He could have thought, *'if I can't do that, then I'm not doing anything.'*
- Yet David got busy. He started making the preparations. He began to store up things that would be instrumental in the construction of the beautiful temple.
- David may have been sidelined from the actual building task, but he was active in contributing to the work to see it established.

In dedicating these goods to God, David is declaring that all of this is Yours to begin with God. I wouldn't have had any victory or accumulated any wealth apart from you God.

- That's how we also need to see our belongings isn't it? We really have nothing apart from the Lord.
- **1 Corinthians 4:7a**, *"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive?"*
- All that we have is from God and we really just need to honor Him through it all.

4. David Strengthens All of Israel – 8:13-18

8:13-14 - *And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴ He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David wherever he went.*

David ventures further south now into Edom. It says he took out 18,000 Syrians, but 1 Chronicles 18:12 says it was Edomites. This would make more sense as the Valley of Salt is toward Edomite territory. And this passage goes on to say that the Edomites became David's servants. Once again it's the Lord blessing David and preserving him, giving the success. God is the one doing this for His sake.

But in all this David was making himself a name.

Proverbs 22:1, *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold."*

Having a reputable name is a wonderful thing and it's to be something we desire more than riches. Riches may come and go, they could be stolen, but a good name just stays with you (unless you do something stupid). People can try and tarnish it or steal it away, but a good name stands up against attack.

- David made himself a name. What are we doing to contribute to a good name?

8:15-18 - *So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. ¹⁶ Joab the son of Zeruah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁷ Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah was the scribe; ¹⁸ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.*

So the kingdom of Israel is probably under its greatest period of power and control. David has not only shown himself a great leader militarily, but now he sets things in order administratively. He's a good king desiring to see judgment executed where needed, but also justice be given to all his people. He's doing things fairly and justly.

And now we see him putting people in positions to ensure that everything continues to run smoothly.

- **Joab** was the general over the army.
- **Jehoshaphat** was the recorder. He kept track of state business, acting as a secretary.

- **Zadok** and **Ahimelech** were the priests. There were obviously more, but these two were the principle priests during David's reign.
- **Seraiah** was the scribe. This position was like that of secretary of state, drafting official documents and handling correspondence.
- **Benaiah** was over the **Cherethites** and **Pelethites**. These guys were an elite company of soldiers, probably mercenaries. Under Benaiah's command they served as royal bodyguards.
- **David's sons were chief ministers**. This means they served as priests.

So with David's kingdom expanded externally and functioning in justice internally, David now focuses on showing kindness to someone in Saul's family.

Again, David has been blessed abundantly and it's all due to God's grace. Now the real blessing comes in extending this same favour to others.

5. David Inquires of Saul's Survivors – 9:1-5

9:1 - Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

David has been ruling fairly, and his reign has been fruitful. His enemies are all basically a non-threat right now. And so he takes this time to ask, 'What can I do for my fellow man?' He had asked in Ch. 7, 'What can I do for God?', but now he ponders what he could do for others. Again, it's no wonder David was used so greatly by God.

Back in 1 Samuel 20, David made a covenant with Jonathan:

- **1 Samuel 20:14–17**, *"And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die; ¹⁵ but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth."* ¹⁶ *So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "Let the Lord require it at the hand of David's enemies."* ¹⁷ *Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul."*
- **1 Samuel 20:42**, *"Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.'"* *So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city."*

And now many years after this covenant has been made, and while David seems to be enjoying some rest, he remembers this covenant and seeks to fulfill it.

- David was a man who desired to uphold his word, he was a man of integrity.
- Are we quick to keep our word, or do we look for loopholes to get out of something?

And this was particularly exceptional regarding what this had to do with.

At a time where David perhaps would have rather shown revenge on the house of Saul, he looked to show kindness.

- This word for **kindness** is this great Hebrew word – *hesed*. It's used some 245 times throughout the Old Testament, and it's translated as kindness, mercy, lovingkindness, goodness, and loyalty.
- It speaks of a loyal love; a covenant love. It's a rich word that when you hear it, it reveals the heart of God.

David could have at this point thought, Jonathan is gone, he won't know if I fulfilled this either way. Saul was a jerk; I don't owe him anything. But David responded with kindness; *hesed*. He took this first step in initiating this mercy and grace.

- It's what God has done for us. He takes the initiative to impart grace to us. God always takes the first step towards man's redemption.

And this story will clearly portray the gospel for us,

9:2-3 - *And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" He said, "At your service!"³ Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet."*

Ziba was a servant of the family of Saul. He was known as the retainer of the family and its goods. He was quite aware of the condition of Saul's family and the state it was in.

So far the name of Jonathan's son isn't even given, just a description: ***There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet.***

We have the account of what happened to Jonathan's son in 2 Samuel 4:4.

- **2 Samuel 4:4**, *"Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth."*

When Saul and Jonathan were slain in battle, the nurse picked up Jonathan's son to get him to safety. It was customary in this day to kill off the king's descendants so they don't try and reclaim the throne.

9:4-5 - So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar." 5 Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar.

So Mephibosheth was taken into exile where he remained until this time. He's at the house of Machir in **Lo Debar** (east of the Jordan river and outside his family estate).

- Lo Debar means 'not a pasture'. Mephibosheth fled out of fear of David and remained in a place of bareness. There are many people today who have a wrong view of God and are afraid of Him. They put themselves in hiding and end up in a place of bareness. Some have a view of God where they fail to see His faithfulness and kindness and so live life in their own strength and energy. And in so doing they wind up in a dry place where there's no opportunity to be fed and strengthened. Mephibosheth in a sense experienced this. It's what we too will experience when we live our lives apart from God and without trust in God.

When David calls for Mephibosheth I'm sure Machir and Mephibosheth were saying their tearful goodbyes. They were probably thinking this is the last time we'll see each other. David is finally going to take you out.

But Mavhir will see the kindness of David and it will impact him. In fact, later on when David is on the run during Absalom's rebellion, David will also flee to Lo Debar and it will be Machir who will come to his aid and help him out. David by showing kindness will be a benefactor of similar kindness. It's true that we reap what we sow.

- It says in **Proverbs 18:24**, *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly..."* David did just that!

6. David Shows Kindness to Mephibosheth – 9:6-8

9:6-7 - Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, “Mephibosheth?” And he answered, “Here is your servant!”⁷ So 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.”

Again, Mephibosheth came with great fear. He was probably thinking this is when David finishes the job of wiping out the family of Saul. He prostrates himself on the ground to perhaps give David a clean strike of the neck and have this finish quickly and painlessly. But this was not the heart of David. Neither is it the heart of our Saviour.

- Isn't that what keeps us from coming humbly to Jesus? We think He's just wanting to strike out at us and punish us for all the ways we mess up. Though sin is never to be ignored or tolerated, Jesus comes with grace to set us free from sin. How we need to come to him humbly with our struggles and seek His help and strength.
- Mephibosheth bows down humbly and he hears those wonderful words, **Do not fear**. Isn't that what Jesus often spoke to His disciples when they thought they were blowing it or in trouble.

Mephibosheth doesn't need to fear because David is going to show him kindness. He's going to restore the things that has been taken from him. Not only is David going to do all these things but he's going to invite Mephibosheth in to fellowship and relationship. David says, **you shall eat bread at my table continually**.

Mephibosheth isn't going to be executed, he's being exalted. He's given an amazing invitation and privilege. He gets to be in relationship with the King.

- What a wonderful picture of God's love and grace towards us. He brings us to Him and sits us at His table so we can enjoy fellowship and communion with Him.
- David lavished this grace upon Mephibosheth and God has upon us!
- **Ephesians 1:7–8**, *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,”*

9:8 - Then he bowed himself, and said, “What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?”

Mephibosheth is overwhelmed at the goodness of David. Are we with the goodness of God?

Mephibosheth sees himself as just a dead dog. Yet it was the condition we were all in when Jesus came and spared us.

Ephesians 2:4–7, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

7. David Has Ziba Serve Mephiboseth – 9:9-13

9:9-11 - ***And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. ¹⁰ You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always."** Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. ¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do." "As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons."*

Mephibosheth is given the royal treatment, he became like one of David's sons! This shows this awesome intimacy he now shared with David – a special relationship.

- In the same way, we too have become children of God – 1 John 3:1.
- The question is, are we living like children of God?

9:12-13 - ***Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³ So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet."***

Mephibosheth is not only given a new relationship, but he's also given a new home. And through God's grace we've been given a new residence. It's an eternal residence where we will always eat at the king's table.

Though we are a bunch of lame, crippled people who have been hurt by the fall, we have been shown incredible grace by our heavenly Father. We've been

invited to come and partake in fellowship with our Lord. Have we come in and enjoyed this kindness of the Lord?

2 Samuel 9 is one of the clearest portrayals of the gospel in the Old Testament.

We see in this story:

1. Our spiritual state.

We're broken by the fall. Lame, unable to do anything to help our cause.
We're spiritually helpless.

2. Our lostness.

Apart from Christ we're in a barren wasteland. Without hope. We're empty and far away from the blessing of God.

3. God initiates grace.

Mephibosheth didn't come seeking David's mercy, David sought out Mephibosheth. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus takes the initiative in our salvation.

4. Salvation is because of Jesus alone.

David showed kindness because of Jonathan's sake. God forgives us and shows kindness because of His Son.

5. We're given a new identity.

Mephibosheth was now seen as one of the king's sons. He's been adopted in. In the same way God has made us His sons; we are heirs of God's riches (Revelation 3:20-21). Grace doesn't just help us, it redefines us.