

The Weight of the Crown

With Justice and Equity

2 Samuel 8-10

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And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet (2 Samuel 9, ESV).

2 Samuel 7 concluded with this prayer from David as he reflected on God's covenantal promise to him:

And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever (2 Sam. 7:28-29).

The narrator follows this statement with three chapters (8-10) that show us the practical implications of God's promise in his covenant with David. The Lord said to David, "I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies before you. And I will make for you a great name . . ." (2 Sam. 7:9). Oh, how true that has been for David, and we see how true it will be immediately. God makes promises and is true to them.

But there are two other things to keep in mind as we look at 2 Samuel 8-10. I'm cuing you in to the direction of my applications at the beginning of the sermon today.

First, the promises of God create a posture for those who are blessed by them. In other words, God's promises are not philosophical, theoretical, or hypothetical. The promises of God are the ground upon which believers stand. As the hymn goes:

*Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.*

We not only believe God's promises, we live by them.

Secondly, the promises of God point to something more, a time when they'll be fulfilled completely. David was promised that "my love will not depart from him" (2 Sam. 7:15), looking to future generations and to the coming Messiah.

We not only believe God's promises, we live for them.

2 Samuel 8-10 helps us to see three different examples of the application of God's promises in David's life.

Victory (Ch. 8)

Remember that the narrator is not necessarily sharing stories in the order in which they happened. Rather, he's using the stories in David's life to weave together a message because 1 & 2 Samuel are not about Samuel, Saul, or David. These books are about God and his reign.

That's why it's important to see that immediately following the promise of the Davidic covenant, the narrator highlights the defeat of the Philistines (8:1). Perhaps you remember that it was the Philistines who captured the ark of God in 1 Samuel 5. What's more, God appointed Saul as king to "save my people from the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 9:16). And it was Goliath, who represented the Philistine army, whom David killed in 1 Samuel 17. Israel faced threats from many nations, but none were more historical and challenging than that of the Philistines.

2 Samuel 8:1 is noteworthy: "David defeated the Philistines and subdued them . . ." It's an indication of the blessing of God through establishing the kingdom of Israel under David.

There's a particular word that is used often in this chapter connected to the idea of smite, struck down, or defeated. It's the Hebrew word *nakah*.¹ It's used seven times in the first ten verses: "defeated the

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 110.

Philistines” (v. 1), “defeated Moab” (v. 2), “defeated Hadadezer” (v. 3), “David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians” (v. 5), “when Toi . . . heard that David defeated the whole army” (v. 9), “because he fought against Hadadezer and defeated him” (v. 10), and “he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites” (v. 13).

The listing of these nations creates a clear picture of the comprehensive peace that is brought to Israel. David’s reign extends to the north, south, east, and west. The nation of Israel had never known this level of territorial victory, and it comes after the promise of peace in the Davidic Covenant. This is not complete and final. It’s a foretaste of future generations and the Messiah’s kingdom.

Along with his military victories, David also secures the land by building garrisons or military outposts to defend the nation. Additionally, he collects tributes from the conquered nations, along with shields of gold and bronze. These were dedicated to the Lord (v. 11).

This early record is marked by victory through the Lord’s help:

- 8:6 – “And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went”
- 8:14 – “And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went”

Further, we find, in verses 15-18, a list of those who served in his administration. The names and their roles help us to see that David is establishing a nation with a functional government. Verse 15 summarizes it this way: “So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people” (v. 15). In other words, David’s reign was marked by what was just and what was right. This is what the prophet Zechariah says:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart (Zech. 7:8-10).

David was living by the promise of God. His victory brought peace for his people. This is not only true of King David, but also of anyone who embraces the kingdom wherever God places them. Dale Davis writes:

You do not rule the kingdom, nor will you ever bring it. But you can *exemplify* the kingdom in whatever offices God has placed you (e.g. the ‘office’ of elder, father, mother, employer, employee, and so on). If you keep doing what is just and right toward the people connected with you in your various capacities, then the ideal of the kingdom is clear, the order of the kingdom is enjoyed.²

² Dale Ralph Davis, [*2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 115.

Doesn't this remind you of the King of kings? Jesus's victory through the cross and the empty tomb creates peace to those who enter his kingdom. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). We not only believe God's promises, we live by them and for them.

Grace (Ch. 9)

With all this blessing from God and victory, it's fascinating that the next account in 2 Samuel is about David's kindness and grace to a relative of Jonathan: Mephibosheth. In fact, David looks for someone to whom he can be gracious (v. 1). The kindness of God to David created a pent-up longing to be gracious to Mephibosheth, along with his previous promise to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20.

In the same way that the word "defeated" was prominent in the last chapter, here we find the word "kindness." It's used in the following verses:

- v. 1 – "that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake"
- v. 3 – "that I may show the kindness of God to him"
- v. 7 – "do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan"

This is the Hebrew word *hesed*, and it refers to loyalty, steadfast love, kindness, and goodness. It's the word that God proclaimed about himself when he passed by as Moses was in the cleft of the rock:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod. 34:6).

So, this word and these actions are deeply rooted in the character and heart of God.

David asks a former servant of Saul if there are any surviving family members (v. 3a). The servant replies, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet" (v. 3b). David summons Mephibosheth.

When he arrives, Mephibosheth falls on his face before David and proclaims himself David's servant. David's response is incredible:

And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always" (2 Sam. 9:7).

David offered him protection, provision, and position.³ And Mephibosheth is completely overwhelmed: He asks, "What is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" (v. 8). No doubt he was deeply concerned that David would take out retribution on him as an extended family member of Saul. But instead he receives unexpected grace and kindness—*hesed*.

³ Dale Ralph Davis, [*2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 123.

But it gets even better as David commands that the estate of Saul should be granted to Mephibosheth and all the proceeds should be given to him (vv. 9-10). From that moment on, he was treated like one of David's own sons. He lived in Jerusalem, and he always ate at the king's table.

What a story of grace! The text ends with a reminder that Mephibosheth was lame in both feet. Prior to this encounter with David, we're left to wonder what his life was like. He couldn't work. He was probably dependent on the support of others. And he was born into the wrong family. He's living far from Jerusalem when David summons him. Just think of all the challenges stacked against him. Disabled body. Wrong family. Exiled. Until David extends *hesed* love to him. And when that happens, he becomes part of the royal family.

Now, this is an amazingly gracious moment in David's life. And does it not remind you of the picture of grace that we find in the New Testament? If you are a Christian, your story is worse than Mephibosheth's. The Bible tells us that we weren't lame but dead in our sins. We weren't exiled but the enemies of God. We weren't just on the wrong side but filled with all kinds of rebellion.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:4-9).

We not only believe the promises of God; we live by them.

Perseverance (Ch. 10)

You might be tempted to think that if you are a recipient of God's grace and if you live in a gracious manner, that all will be well. But that would be naïve. Even though David is God's chosen king and even though the Lord was with him, conflicts and problems abound. In fact, we'll see David's biggest failure next week with his sin with Bathsheba. But in chapter 10 we see a problem emerge despite David's graciousness.

Chapter 10 begins with the death of the Ammonite king (v. 1). In an act of kindness and diplomacy, David sends a delegation to express his condolences, along with a pledge to continue the good relations that he had previously with the now-deceased king (v. 2).

However, the Israelite envoys are viewed with suspicion by the new king's advisors, and they suggest that David is sending spies into the land (v. 3). The envoys were humiliated by shaving off part of their beards and by having their garments cut at the waist (v. 4). The intention was the humiliation of these men and to send a message to David's court. Well, it worked. It started a needless war.

The Ammonites hired Syrian mercenaries to fight for them when they realized that war was about to break out (vv. 6-8). Joab and Abishai fought against the Syrians and the Ammonites with a plan to help each other if the battlelines changed dramatically (v. 11).

Listen to his God-centered words in preparing for battle:

Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him (2 Sam. 10:12).

It seems that the battle is over fairly quickly with a decisive victory for Israel (vv. 13-18). The result was the surrender of the Syrians along with regret that they had aligned themselves with the Ammonites.

And so, we see the way that the promise of God works in David's life. Underneath his life is the promise of God. David lives by this promise and for this promise. Psalm 60 was likely written during this time. And we read:

You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger. You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah (Ps. 60:3-4).

It's an invitation to run to him, to take shelter in his promises.

Do you know that we are called to do the same? The promises of God have implications now and in the future. This is how we have hope and how we persevere.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted (Heb. 12:1-3).

We not only believe God's promises, we live by them and for them.

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