

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 21: Kindness to Mephibosheth; David and Bathsheba -- 2 Samuel

9:1–11:27

This lesson holds two scenes that could hardly be more different, and we need both. The first is one of the most tender pictures of grace in the Old Testament. David, now secure on his throne, asks a startling question. Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? Remember, Saul had hunted David for years. By the custom of the times, a new king would wipe out the old king's family. But David is not looking for someone to destroy. He is looking for someone to bless.

They find Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, lame in both feet, hiding in a place called Lo-debar, which means a place of no pasture, a place of nothing. He has every reason to expect death. Instead the king restores all his grandfather's land to him and sets him at the royal table, to eat as one of the king's own sons, continually. Can you see yourself in this story? Here is grace to the undeserving, kindness offered for the sake of a covenant the recipient did nothing to earn. It is a small, bright window into the heart of God, who seeks us out in our Lo-debar and seats us at His table.

And then the lesson turns, and the brightness gives way to one of the darkest chapters in all of Scripture. In the spring, when kings go forth to battle, David stays home. From his rooftop he sees a woman, Bathsheba, and instead of turning away, he sends for her, and he commits adultery with her. When she sends word that she is with child, David does not repent. He schemes. He tries to cover his sin, and when the cover fails, he arranges for her husband Uriah, one of his most loyal soldiers, to be killed in battle. One sin has led to another, and a man after God's own heart has fallen far.

We will not dwell on the sordid details, and we must not excuse the sin. The chapter ends with a sentence that hangs over everything that follows like a storm cloud: but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. We will save David's confrontation and repentance for the next lesson. For now, let this chapter sober us. If David could fall this far, so can we. Let us walk through it humbly, asking God to guard our own hearts, and let us never lose the wonder of the grace we saw at the king's table.

Group Discussion: What does David's deliberate search for someone from Saul's house to bless, rather than to destroy, teach us about the kind of kindness God delights in?

Personal Reflection: Where might God be calling you to show undeserved kindness to someone, simply because of a love and a covenant larger than that person's worthiness?

Read 2 Samuel 9:1–11:27

Study Questions

1. David showed kindness to Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake and because of a covenant; what does this reveal about the nature of grace and the ground on which God shows kindness to us?
2. Who in your life is hiding in a Lo-debar, expecting rejection, to whom you could extend the kind of unearned kindness David showed Mephibosheth?
3. Mephibosheth, lame and undeserving, was seated at the king's table to eat as one of the king's sons continually; how does this picture the privilege God grants to those He brings near?
4. How does remembering that you have been seated at the King's table by grace, not merit, shape the way you treat others and view yourself?
5. The account of David's sin begins by noting that he remained at home when kings go forth to battle; what does this teach about how idleness and being out of our proper place can open the door to temptation?
6. Where in your own life are you most vulnerable to temptation when you are idle, unaccountable, or out of the place where you ought to be?

7. When Bathsheba sent word that she was with child, David tried to cover his sin rather than confess it; what does his scheming teach us about the way one sin tends to multiply into others?
8. When you have sinned, are you more inclined to cover it and manage the consequences, or to confess it and bring it into the light, and why?
9. The chapter closes with the words, but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord; what does the fall of a man after God's own heart, and God's grief over his sin, teach us about the deceitfulness and seriousness of sin and about the need to guard our own hearts?
10. Name one specific way this sobering chapter is moving the Lord to guard your heart and to keep you walking watchfully and humbly with Him.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 1 Samuel 20:14–17, the covenant of kindness between David and Jonathan that David now honors; Ephesians 2:4–7, God in His rich mercy seats us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; 1 Corinthians 10:12–13, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall, yet God provides a way of escape; James 1:14–15, every man is tempted when drawn away of his own lust, and sin when finished brings forth death; Hebrews 3:12–14, take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

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