

Message #23

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Life of David

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GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

2 SAMUEL 8-9

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Steven Marsh was the closest living relative of his aunt. So when she passed away many years ago, this New Jersey man was the primary beneficiary of her estate, which did not seem to be very large. The part of the will that was addressed to him went as follows: **“To my beloved Steven Marsh I bequeath my family Bible and all it contains, along with the residue of my estate after my funeral expenses and just and lawful debts are paid.”** When everything was settled, the nephew got a few hundred dollars and that old family Bible.

Stephen Marsh was not a wealthy man. He spent thirty years of his life living on a small pension. In preparation for moving into his son's home, where he hoped to spend the remaining years of his life, he cleaned out his attic. There in the trunk was the family Bible that he inherited from his aunt. He picked it up and, for the first time, began to page through it. There he made a discovery that sent shivers up his spine. For scattered among the pages of that Bible were banknotes. He counted them all up and found that there was \$5000. This incident happened a little over fifty years ago. Keep in mind that he received the estate thirty years before that. The \$5000 was worth a bit more back then than it is today. The point is that riches were available to Stephen Marsh that he could have been enjoying all along. They were right there in the Bible. (Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 509)

God has likewise willed us treasures that are contained in His Word. Too often we are unaware of the valuables that He has made available to us. We need to know about them and claim them.

The two chapters before us this morning tell us important things about the One who has given us promises in His Word. They also provide us with the opportunity of learning something about the riches which He has made available to us.

In our study of the life of David we have seen that he has finally become king of the whole country of Israel. He made Jerusalem its capital, and he brought up the Ark of the Covenant to the city. We saw last time in #7 that David set out to build a temple for the Ark, but the Lord appeared to the prophet Nathan and told him to tell David that he was not the one to build the temple. The message to David was that God would build David a house, a dynasty. This Davidic Covenant promised David that he would have a great name, that Israel would have a certain territory, that there would be rest from enemies, that he would have an eternal throne and eternal kingdom, and that his royal line would last forever.

This Davidic Covenant is part of God's kingdom program, His effort to establish His rule upon the earth. Today we shall see how this program continues to unfold and what implications it has for us.

I.

In #8 of 2 Samuel we learn about GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID: NEAR TERM FULFILLMENT OF REST AND LAND. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID...) Verse 1 tells us: **"After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines."**

We might get the impression from "after this" that the events of this chapter happened after the events of #7. Probably that is not the case. For in #7 v. 1 we read last week, **"Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet..."** Chapter 8 is going to describe all of the various battles that David had that eventually produce the situation of rest that is described at the beginning of #7. So the initial phrase of our verse would probably be better understood to mean something like "in the course of time," as some of the scholars suggest. It is not necessarily intended to be an indicator of chronological sequence. What then follows is a summary of David's conquests which happened over a period of many years during his rule.

First among the conquests is the defeat of the Philistines. (DAVID 14A) The narrator may have in mind the two battles with the Philistines that David had early in his reign, and which were described in #5. What may have happened either then or at a later time was the capture of Metheg-ammah. No Philistine city of that name has ever been discovered. The literal translation of this Hebrew term is "bridle of the mother," which some have understood to mean "authority of the mother city." The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles #18 v. 1 says that it was Gath which was captured. Gath seems to have been the chief city of the Philistines. So it makes sense that this is the Philistine city in view.

According to v. 2, **“And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.”** (DAVID 14 C MOAB) Moab was the country to the southeast of Israel.

The text indicates that two-thirds of the people, probably soldiers in the Moabite army, were killed. David’s ancestor was Ruth, a Moabite woman described in the Book of Ruth. We saw earlier when David started to go on the run from Saul that he took his parents over to Moab to keep them safe from King Saul. Why he now attacks the Moabites is not explained. There is one old Jewish tradition that the Moabites acted with treachery to David’s parents and killed them. We don’t know.

Verse 3: **“David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates.”** (DAVID 14 C ZOBAB) Zobah was to the north of Israel. The story seems to be that as King Hadadezer was attacking to the north of him, seeking to gain territory up to the Euphrates River, David attacked from the south.

According to v. 4, **“And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstrung all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots.”** Hamstringing the horses meant cutting a tendon near the hooves to make them incapable of pulling chariots. Much of Israel is hilly, perhaps especially the territory that Israel controlled at that time, and chariots were not useful in hilly territory.

Verse 5: **“And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians.”** (DAVID 14 C DAMASCUS) Damascus appears to have been part of this looser confederation of city-states that was called Zobah.

Verse 6: **“Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.”** The narrator recognizes that YHWH, the God of Israel, is keeping His covenant promises. David was promised land and rest from his enemies. Now the territory of Israel is expanding toward its promised boundaries. David is beating up on the bad guys.

There is a larger principle illustrated here. Conflict precedes conquest of territory designated for the Lord. The extension of God’s rule is resisted. Such is the case today. Persecution of Christians is a major

challenge in much of the world. When the final form of God's kingdom is established upon the earth, it will not be the result of democratic election. According to Revelation #19 & 20, the Lord will return in person and will forcibly establish His rule upon the whole earth. In the meantime the devil has a certain control over the kingdoms of this world.

Look then at vv. 7 & 8: **“And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze.”** What is David going to do with all of this stuff? Use it for himself? I suspect that he is setting aside for the temple project which will be yet future.

Verses 9 & 10: **“When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze.”**

Hamath (DAVID 14C HAMATH) was to the north of Zobah. We saw in v. 3 that King Hadadezer of Zobah was pushing north toward the Euphrates River. Hamath lay in that direction. So King Toi was happy to have Hadadezer defeated by David.

Occasionally nations are more receptive to the advance of the kingdom of God. Years later the prophet Zechariah would declare (ZECHARIAH 2:11) in # 2 v. 11 of his book, **“And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.”**

In our individual response to the advance of the kingdom of God upon our own lives, some of us are resistant. We fight. We do bad things. Some of us end up in jail. Others of us resist in more politically correct ways. We come up with intellectual objections to the Gospel. Some of us are more like King Toi of Hamath. We are more welcoming to the advance of the kingdom of God. We may have grown up in a Christian family. We may have grown up in the church. Acceptance comes more easily. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Back in our text in vv. 11 & 12 we read, **“These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.”** The gifts

from King Toi were added to this gold and silver, which were dedicated to the Lord. Probably these things were set apart for the temple construction project.

(PROJECTOR ON--- DAVID 14A 1 AMMONITES) The additional two nations added to the conquered list are Ammon and Amalek. The Ammonites were to the east of Israel, and the Amalekites were to the south of Israel.

According to vv. 13 & 14, **“And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.”** (DAVID 14A 1 EDOMITES) Edom was to the southeast of Israel. Until fifteen to twenty years ago archaeologists did not think that there was much of anything in that area worth taking. Then they discovered copper mines dating to the time of David. There is evidence that the Edomites had an organized civilization.

In 1 Chronicles #18 v. 12 We are told that Abishai, the brother of General Joab, took a lead in this military operation. The result of the victory was that David made a name for himself. According to the Davidic Covenant described in #7 v 9 a great name was one of the promises that the Lord gave to David. The military conquests and the expansion of the kingdom produced this result. In v. 14 there is the recognition that this is the product of the Lord's work. He is fulfilling His promises to David.

The heading of Psalm 60 makes reference to this defeat of the Edomites. (PSALM 60:11-12) In vv. 11 and 12 of that Psalm David writes, **“Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man! With God we shall do valiantly, it is he who will tread down our foes.”**

The promise of an expanded land territory was also part of the Davidic Covenant. The listing of conquered foes in this chapter shows that Israel's kingdom has expanded to the west with the defeat of the Philistines, to the north with the defeat of the Syrians, to the east with the defeat of the Ammonites and Moabites, and to the south with the defeat of the Amalekites and Edomites. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Back in v. 15 of our text we read, **“So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.”** David functions as both the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice in his country. He is a man of integrity in these roles.

Verse 16: **“Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder...”** The recorder gave reports to the king and communicated to the people the royal decrees.

Verse 17: **“...and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary...”** Zadok and Ahimelech shared the duties of chief priest. Seraiah functioned as the chief scribe.

Verse 18: **“...and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were priests...”** The Cherethites and Pelethites were Philistines who had come over to David before he became king. This mercenary force functioned as a palace guard. Because they were not Israelites, they were separate from tribal politics and had loyalty only to King David.

The word used to describe David's sons is the Hebrew word for “priests,” but the original word occasionally had a broader meaning, similar to how we use our English word “ministers.” Often that word is used for us clergy types. But sometimes “ministers” is used of government leaders, as in Britain. Indeed in 1 Chronicles #18 v. 17 the sons of David are more specifically described as royal advisors.

Chapter 8 shows us that YHWH is keeping His promises to David. He is giving David a great name, an expanded territory, and rest from his enemies. The final fulfillment of the promises of the Davidic Covenant comes later. The assurance to us is that God always keeps His promises.

II.

In #9 we learn about DAVID'S COVENANT WITH JONATHAN: MODEL OF COMMITMENT TO OUR PROMISES. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. DAVID'S COVENANT WITH JONATHAN...) We read in v. 1: **“And David said, ‘Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?’”**

The timing of the events in this chapter is unclear. David's use of the term for “kindness” is significant. It is that Hebrew word *chesed*, which is used of covenant faithfulness. David is making reference to the covenant that he made with Jonathan fifteen or twenty years earlier.

In 1 Samuel #20 vv. 14-16 we were told about this covenant. (1 SAMUEL 20:14) Beginning in v. 14 Jonathan says to David **“If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die; (1 SAMUEL 20:15) and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.’ (1 SAMUEL 20:16) And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.”** Though these promises were made fifteen or twenty years earlier, David has not forgotten them. He is a man of his word. He is a man of integrity.

According to vv. 2 & 3 (PROJECTOR OFF) in our passage, **“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.”** Ziba is associated with the administration of King Saul. He could have reason to fear David. It was typical of kings in the Ancient Near East to do away with all of the top advisors of a rival king.

Such is not the case with David. The king asks about descendants of Jonathan, and Ziba tells him about Mephibosheth. We saw reference to him made in #4, when there was discussion about possible heirs to succeed King Ish-bosheth who ruled over Israel for a time. (PROJECTOR ON--- 2 SAMUEL 4:4) In v. 4 of #4 we were told, **“Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled 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 as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.”**

Back here in #9 Ziba gives us this additional bit of information in v. 4 (PROJECTOR OFF): **“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.”** The exact location of Lo-debar is unknown. There are a few other references made to people from this town. They seem to be in the vicinity of Mahanaim which was the capital of Israel under King Ish-bosheth. Mahanaim was east of the Jordan River. The capital of Israel was established there probably to be as far away from the Philistines in the west as possible. Lo-debar would then have been in the eastern edge of Israel, a relatively long distance from Jerusalem.

The name “Lo-debar” means “no pasture” in Hebrew. It implies a barren land. It was perhaps near the Arabian desert. Why was Mephibosheth living there? He was probably trying to make himself scarce. He probably knew that Jonathan, his father, was close to David. But he also would have known that Grandpa Saul tried to kill David. He also knew that the normal practice in the Ancient Near East was for a new king to kill all of the male descendants of a king from a different royal line.

Verses 5 & 6 tell us: **“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.’”** David seeks out Mephibosheth. He compels him to come to Jerusalem, and the lame descendant of Saul is scared.

Thus we read in v. 7, **“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.’”** David’s agreement with Jonathan could be interpreted to mean that he would not kill the descendants of Jonathan, in contrast to the normal practice of Near Eastern kings. Simply letting Mephibosheth live might be sufficient to keep the promise that David made to Jonathan. But David is restoring Saul’s estates to Mephibosheth.

David could have claimed these estates for himself. After all, he was the king who took over the position that Saul had previously occupied. In addition to that, he had married Michal, Saul’s daughter. But David is generous. He gives Mephibosheth a place at his table. He makes him part of his royal household. He provides Mephibosheth with protection, provision, and position.

Verse 8: **“And he [Mephibosheth] paid homage and said, ‘What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?’”** Mephibosheth realizes that he has been the object of extraordinary grace and love.

Verses 9 & 10: **“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.”**

This Ziba is not a servant like we might think of an ancient household slave. He is a government bureaucrat. He is a manager who has fifteen sons and twenty servants of his own. Perhaps he had multiple wives. So it is that Mephibosheth is not only given a place in the royal household, he is provided with additional income. He is going to be the recipient of considerable abundance, though he has done absolutely nothing to earn it.

According to vv. 11 & 12, **“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.”** Mephibosheth becomes like an adopted son. His own son Mica is added to the household. All of Ziba’s household comes to work for Mephibosheth.

Verse 13: **“So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.”** The chapter concludes with a reminder of Mephibosheth’s lameness and inability. Yet he lives always at the king’s table.

There is a reminder in this chapter of the value of commitment to our promises. David could have written off the promise that he made fifteen or twenty years earlier. It was a new time and new circumstances. Yet David not only kept his promise, he went above and beyond the call of duty to exhibit generosity and grace toward this grandson of King Saul and son of his friend Jonathan.

How do we do with our commitments and promises? Do we keep our commitments to our mates, to our kids--- the things that we promise to do for them and with them, to our bosses, to our church, to our contracts, to our customers, to our friends, to the Lord? Can the people around us be sure that we will fulfill our responsibilities? Is our word alone reliable?

David went above and beyond his promises. He exhibited love and mercy. Mephibosheth had nothing to offer David for his generosity. Yet David exhibited *chesed*, that merciful kind of love. In this time of coronavirus pandemic, in this time where Nevada has the highest unemployment rate in the country, there are people around us who may need our merciful love.

III.

We also need to consider #9 from the perspective of GOD’S COVENANT WITH US: DAVID AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. GOD’S COVENANT WITH US...) We have noted that David is a type of Jesus Christ. He foreshadows and pictures in certain ways the future Messiah. Jesus is frequently referred to in the New Testament as the Son of David. Our #9 exudes this typology.

Mephibosheth is Steven Marsh. He is the man who has an inheritance but does not realize it. Promises have been made to him, but he has not claimed them. He has riches available to him, but he does not know it.

Mephibosheth is you and I. The exact meaning of the first part of his name is uncertain. But the last part of his name is "shame." Mephibosheth is conscious of his shortcomings. His situation is the result of a fall. He was not directly responsible for that fall, but he lives in the reality of it. His whole life is affected by his resulting disability.

Furthermore, Mephibosheth lives in Lo-debar, the land of no pasture, the place of barrenness. It is a place far away from the king. Mephibosheth has chosen to live this life far away from the king. He has probably lived a life of fear. He indeed has an ancestry from a different line, a different king.

(EPHESIANS 2:1-2) The Apostle Paul describes us in Ephesians #2 vv. 1 & 2. He writes, **"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.."** We were likewise lame and incapable, living far away from the true king. Indeed our lineage involves the prince of the power of the air, the devil. He is the head of a rival kingdom that has been at war with David and his son.

What happened to Mephibosheth? Did he go looking for David? No, he was trying to stay away from him. David went looking for Mephibosheth. When David found him, did he sent him a pair of crutches to help him get to Jerusalem?. Did he give him enabling grace? No, David sought him out and brought him to himself. David, you see, is the shepherd king. Do sheep go looking for a shepherd? No, they by nature stray away. But David, and Jesus the Good Shepherd, seek out their sheep.

In John #10 v. 16 (JOHN 10:16) Jesus is quoted as saying, **"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."**

What happens when Mephibosheth gets to Jerusalem? He brings him into his house. According to v. 11 in our chapter David treated him as one of his sons. In Ephesians #1 v. 5 (EPHESIANS 1:5) we are told, **"[God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.."**

If we have trusted in Jesus Christ, we have been brought into His household. We have been adopted as His sons. We have become as sons of the King.

As an adopted son, Mephibosheth is seated at the king's table. What a merciful love! In Ephesians #2 Paul speaks of the merciful love that God has shown toward us. In vv. 5 & 6 the Apostle writes, **“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...”** From the perspective of heaven, we are already seated at the table with the Son of David.

As with Mephibosheth, we have been promised a permanent place at the table. Furthermore we have received an inheritance. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. We will one day rule with him in His kingdom upon the earth.

Thus it is that the Son of David extends His invitation to us. According to Revelation #3 v. 20 (REVELATION 3:20) Jesus declares, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”** If you have never put your trust in this Jesus, the Son of David, respond to His invitation. Open the door of your life and welcome Him in.