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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today I want to talk to you about David and Mephibosheth. After David killed Goliath with the stone, King Saul tried to kill David. He threw spears at David and David had to jump out of the way. Saul was so angry and mean to David, he chased him all over the countryside trying to kill him. There are some people who are just so mean it's just hard to get around it.

I heard about a man who was walking down a seashore. Sticking out of the sand was an interesting little brass lamp. He picked it up and brushed off the sand and when he did, a mysterious cloud came out of the lamp and there was the proverbial genie. The guy was afraid. The genie said, "I'm here to grant your wish. Any wish you want, the only thing is, whatever I give to you, I give twice as much to your mother-in-law. Now this guy didn't like his mother-in-law very much at all. The genie said, "If you ask for ten million dollars, your mother-in-law will get twenty million dollars. If you ask for a ten-carat diamond, she gets a twenty-carat diamond. If you ask for a ten thousand square foot mansion, she gets a twenty thousand square foot mansion. So what's your wish? This guy was pretty mean and he didn't like his mother-in-law so he thought for a moment and then he said, "I know what my wish is. I want you to scare me half to death!" Well Saul was that way. He was a mean man and spent much of his life trying to put David to death—but David never retaliated. He never struck back. When Saul threw those spears at David, he didn't pick them up and throw them back. He just kept dodging those spears.

Finally, one day Saul died in a battle so David became king. Pretty soon he became a very popular, strong, mighty king. When he came to the throne everything seemed to be running smoothly. He had conquered many other armies and had a beautiful palace in Jerusalem and he was in control of that part of the world. He began to say "I wonder about Saul's family." He asked the question to some of the men in the court around him. He said, "Are there any relatives of Saul who are still alive?" I'm sure this is what those men thought. "Well it's about time. Now comes the big purge. We knew it would happen. Someday David will kill all the descendants of Saul." Because that's just what kings did: You wiped out your competition. They killed anybody who might be a threat to the throne. So, if there were any relatives of Saul's still alive most people thought David would kill them. But David surprised them. He said, "Are there any relatives of Saul still alive that I can show kindness and grace to?"

2 Samuel 9:3-8. "The king asked, 'Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?' Ziba answered the king. 'There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet.' 'Where is he?' the king asked. Ziba answered, 'He is at the house of Makir, son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.' So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, 'Mephibosheth!' 'Your servant,' he replied. 'Don't be afraid,' David said to him, 'for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.' Mephibosheth bowed down and said, 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?'"

Did you know the story of David and Mephibosheth is also a story about Jesus and us? David

was a king who showed kindness and grace to a crippled man and Jesus is the king who shows grace and kindness to all of us who are spiritually crippled.

I want to tell you the story David and Mephibosheth, but I am really talking about Jesus and each one of us. There are two pictures we are going to see.

I. MEPHIBOSHETH: PICTURE OF A SINNER

First of all we see a picture of a sinner, because Mephibosheth is a symbol of every person who is a sinner and every person *is* a sinner. There are three things we can say about Mephibosheth; they are the same three things we can say about each one of us.

1. We are all born into the wrong family

Like Mephibosheth we are all born into the wrong family. Mephibosheth was born into the family of Saul. Saul was his grandfather and Jonathan was his father, so he wasn't in the royal family of David. Most people would have thought because he was in the wrong family he would be an enemy of the king. Each of us is a born sinner. Have you ever discovered you don't have to teach a baby how to sin or lie or steal? We are just all made that way. In fact the Bible says we are all sinners by nature and by choice. It says in Ephesians 2:3, that we are by nature children of wrath. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The one thing I know about every single person in this room one thing is that we all are sinners. Everybody in this room who can understand what I am saying has committed some kind of a sin. You have told a lie? That makes you a liar. Maybe you have stolen something; maybe you've cheated; maybe you've hurt somebody; maybe you've disobeyed your parents. We're all sinners. In other words we are born into the wrong family. We're born into the family of sin and unless we get in the right family, we are in trouble.

2. We have all been crippled by a fall

Here's the second thing you can say about Mephibosheth that you can also say about us: Like Mephibosheth we are crippled by a fall. How did he get that way? 2 Samuel 4: 4 tells us when Mephibosheth was only five, he was back at home and word came to his nursemaid that his grandfather, Saul, and his father, Jonathan, died in battle. They said, "Oh, no!" Because they thought the enemy would be coming after the descendants of Saul. So the nursemaid picked Mephibosheth up in her arms and ran out of the house. Apparently, she tripped and dropped him, maybe he bounced down some steps or something, but whatever happened, that fall crippled him for the rest of his life. He couldn't walk without crutches. Isn't it sad that he was a healthy little boy and then was crippled because he was dropped? The same is true of me and you! In Genesis 3, the Bible talks about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were perfect in a perfect environment. But they sinned and *fell* from God's favor. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and Adam ate the forbidden fruit also. God said, "I'm pushing you out of the Garden of Eden." That's called, "The Fall of Man." The Bible says, "In Adam all of us die, but in Christ all are made alive." So, in a real sense when Adam and Eve fell from God's favor, we all fell. We are born into the wrong family—we are sinners when we are born. We are all crippled, spiritually speaking, by a fall the fall of Adam and Eve. That means you and I normally and naturally

cannot walk in relationship with God.

3. We are all living in a barren land

Here's the third thing we can say about Mephibosheth and it's also true of each one of us. Like Mephibosheth we are living in a barren land. He was living in a place called Lo Debar. Today in the Israeli language or Hebrew the word *Lo* still means "No" *Debar* means "a green pasture," "a green field." He was living in a place where it was not even possible to grow grass or grow crops or fruit and here was David living in a mansion with all the food you wanted to eat and here was poor little Mephibosheth down there, crippled and living in a barren place. Mephibosheth was living there because he was afraid of the king. He was afraid of getting anywhere near David, because he thought he would be killed, because that's what the kings did to the descendants of other kings. So he stayed as far away from the fruitfulness and the food and the riches of the king as he could. And David was up there wanting to have fellowship with Mephibosheth. There are a lot of people today who think God is out to get them. They are afraid of God and think God really doesn't love them. They think He is some mean boss who wants to hurt them.

One time I was down at the beach and saw a guy wearing a t-shirt that read, "God will get you for that!" I don't know for what, but that's what the t-shirt said. That's the attitude of some people. That God is some mean person up in heaven who wants to hurt people. Instead, the Bible tells us God is a loving Father who wants to show us kindness and have a relationship with us. The problem is before we come to Jesus Christ we are all like Mephibosheth. We're in the wrong family. We're crippled by a fall and we are living in a place where there is no fruitfulness a barren place.

II. DAVID: PICTURE OF SALVATION

I want to turn the picture around, because it is not only a picture of a sinner, it is also a picture of salvation. The good news is Mephibosheth didn't have to go to David and say, "Hey, David. Remember me? I'm the son of Jonathan. Can I have a handout?" No. The picture is this: The King is the one who thought about him and sent for him. The King is the one who initiated the relationship with him. That's the good news! You don't have to bang around in the dark. God has already sought you out! God has already sent his Son to die for each one of us here. That's the good news about salvation. The difference between religion and salvation is religion is man trying to find God but salvation is God seeking out man. That's what Jesus did when he came to earth. David said to Ziba, "I want you to go down and get Mephibosheth and bring him to me." This morning in church I was talking about how it is our responsibility to go out and reach the lost. That's exactly what the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is saying to each one of us who are already in the palace, already in the family, already in God's Kingdom. He is saying you and I need to go out there, because our community is full of people like Mephibosheth and he is saying, "I want you to go to that man I want you to go to that woman I want you to go to that teenager I want you to go to that child and I want you to bring them in to me because I want to bless them like I have blessed you.

Let's learn something about salvation. What did Mephibosheth get? Well you can imagine Mephibosheth as he was brought into the throne room with David. He was probably on crutches

or maybe he was carried in, but when he came up to the throne, I imagine Mephibosheth bowed down, because he said, "I'm just a dead dog!" But David said, "Don't be afraid of me, because I only have good for you." Notice the three things David gave Mephibosheth and what God wants to give to every one of us.

1. The King's forgiveness

Like Mephibosheth we all need the King's forgiveness. David said, "Mephibosheth, your grandfather hated my guts! He spent his whole life trying to kill me but I'm not going to hold that sin against you." David says in verse 7, "Don't be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan." He is saying, "I'm not doing it for your sake, Mephibosheth, I'm doing it for the sake of your father, because he and I loved each other." That's what God says to us. "I'm going to show you forgiveness not for your sake but for the sake of my son, Jesus Christ."

God has forgiven you for Christ's sake. This is a beautiful picture. David says, "Mephibosheth for the sake of your father, Jonathan, I am showing you forgiveness and kindness." God says, "Because of my son, Jesus, for his sake, I am willing to show you grace and forgiveness." By the way that word "kindness" there is the Hebrew word, *charis*, which is translated "loving favor" "grace," "mercy." Grace is when God gives you something you desperately need, but you don't deserve.

I played a lot of basketball when I was in junior high and high school; it was my favorite sport. When I was in eighth grade, I was practicing basketball one afternoon. Our coach also coached the ninth grade team after our practices. One afternoon after we were dismissed, my friend Royce and I walked outside and there was Coach Presswood's car. I don't remember exactly what kind of car it was. I think it was a 1952 Chevrolet. Remember when cars didn't have to have keys to crank them? That's how old it was. It was just a push-button starter. Well Roy said to me, "Let's get in Coach Presswood's car." I said, "Oh, we'd better not!" He said, "Oh come on don't be a scaredy cat." So we got in his car. I don't know how we got in there, but I got behind the driver's wheel and Royce was in the passenger seat. He said, "Crank it up!" I said, "I'd better not do that." He said, "Aw, come on, scaredy cat! Do you know how to crank a car?" I was an eighth grader. Sure I know how to crank a car! In this particular car you just turned on the ignition and you didn't have to have a key for that, then there was a little starter button and you just pushed it. We're just sitting there in Coach Presswood's car with the engine running and Royce says, "Let's drive around the circle here." I said, "No we'd better not!" He said, "What are you? A scaredy cat? Do you even know how to drive?" I'm an eighth grader. I know how to drive. So sure enough we drove it around the little circle right there in front of the school. Then he said, "Let's drive it around the whole school. I said, "We'd better not, man. If we get caught, we're going to be in trouble." He said, "Aw come on. Are you a scaredy cat?" So we take off all the way around the school (this is after everybody was gone) and just as we are going around the back of the school, out of the back door of the school walks the principal. He stands there looking at two eighth graders behind the wheel of Coach Presswood's car. He stopped us and walked up to the window, looked at me and said, "What in the world are you doing in Coach Presswood's car? All I could say was "Uhhhh-bub-bub...taking a drive, sir." He hopped in the driver's seat and drove it around to the front, took us out of that car, grabbed each one of us by

the shirt and took us into the gymnasium. Coach Presswood was in the middle of practice with the ninth grade boys. He said, "Coach Presswood. Come over here for a minute!" Coach Presswood didn't like to be interrupted. The principal said, "I caught these two boys. They were stealing your car! I'll let you deal with them!" Coach Presswood's face turned red! He looked at us and said, "I want you boys to sit down over there and I'll deal with you when I finish practice. As for now, you are off the basketball team." I want you to know I loved playing basketball at that time more than I loved anything else in my life! I'm just sitting there thinking, "You dummy! You dummy! You dummy!" I'm thinking about Royce, "You dummy! You dummy! You dummy!" We're sitting there and Coach Presswood made us sit there for about 45 minutes on that hard gym floor. Finally, he dismissed practice and walked over swinging his whistle. He didn't say anything for a few minutes. I think Coach Presswood knew a lot more about us than we thought he did. He knew how much we needed basketball. He said, "For what you guys did I know you deserve to be kicked off this team and you deserve to be disciplined." But he said, "Do you know what I'm going to do to you? I'm going to have you do twenty suicides. A suicide was running to the free throw line the half court line and the other free throw line—that was one suicide. He said, "I'm going to have you do 20 suicides and then I'm going to forgive you and you can still stay on the team if you want." Whew! Coach was showing us grace. He was not giving us what we deserved! We *deserved* to be kicked off the team. We *deserved* to be suspended from school. But he didn't do that. He gave us a punishment and then he forgave us. That's what grace is. God the Father doesn't give us what we *deserve*, because we are all sinners. Every one of us deserves to be separated from God forever and ever in a place the Bible calls "Hell." But when you come to Jesus Christ he shows you grace. He says, "I forgive you!" "I don't give you what you deserve, I give you what you need!" Mephibosheth received the King's forgiveness.

2. The King's fortune

Number two. Mephibosheth also received the King's fortune. David says, "I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table." The Bible says when we come to God we become part of his kingdom. He restores to us everything that Adam and Eve lost in the fall. He says, "Everything that you need in life I give to you."

3. The King's family

He gives us forgiveness, he gives us his fortune, and number three, we become a part of God's family. That's the most beautiful thing. David said to Mephibosheth, "Mephibosheth, I want you to come and I want you to sit down at my table and I want you to eat. Look at verse 11. "Then Ziba said to the king, 'Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do.' So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the King's sons." This man was crippled but he received forgiveness. That's what God gives us. David restored Mephibosheth's lost fortune. That's what God does for us. He restores to us what we lost when Adam and Eve sinned and he said, "But I want you to be a part of my family I want you to be like one of my sons." The Bible says in I John 3:1, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" And Mephibosheth ate at David's table.

In the Bible, sharing a meal together is a time of fellowship. I like to eat with people, because it's

a time of fellowship and sharing together. I'm not one of these people who like to eat alone. I cannot go into a restaurant and eat all by myself. I like to be with somebody. I like to talk when I eat. I like to share fellowship over a meal. That's why Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." That's what David said to Mephibosheth.

Picture a beautiful banquet table set for dinner in the royal dining room. It is loaded down with all kinds of fruit, bread, juicy meats, all kinds of vegetables. I mean it's more food than you can ever imagine eating! The head of the table is reserved for King David. David comes in and is seated at the head of the table. Then in walks the King's son, Amnon—who by the way was going to be the next king, until he got in trouble. Here he is dignified, clever, smart in a way that's different from anybody else. Amnon comes and sits down. Coming out of another bedroom is Solomon. Solomon is so intelligent! He's been studying his scrolls all day and Solomon comes and sits down at the other table. Then making a grand entrance is the King's other son Absalom. Absalom looks like the cover *GQ Magazine* with his dark, wavy hair. He struts in and sits down. But there's one empty chair. Then, coming in from the other end of the dining hall you hear this sound. Clap, shuffle, clap, shuffle, clap, shuffle, clap...and Mephibosheth comes in obviously crippled—but then he sits down and the beautiful thing is when Mephibosheth slides his crippled legs up under the table he looks just like everybody else! His affliction is covered up and he looks just like the other sons of the King.

CONCLUSION

When you are part of the family of God, the blood of Jesus Christ covers up whatever you have done in the past, all those stupid things that have crippled you! God looks at you as if you are totally whole and restored. The story of David and Mephibosheth is the story of Jesus, the King of Kings and each of us who has been spiritually crippled.

If you died tonight, do you know for certain you would go to heaven when you die? Have you ever come to a place in your life when you know for certain you have eternal life and you will go to heaven when you die? Has there ever come a time in your life when you have said, "I am a sinner! I admit it! I'm sorry for my sin, God. I know I can never be good enough to be accepted into heaven on my own behavior. I believe, Lord Jesus, that you came into the world and that you died on the cross for my sins and I believe that you were raised again from the dead and right now, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins and I put my faith and trust in you, Lord Jesus. Jesus, I come before you like Mephibosheth came before David. I say, "I'm nothing but a dead dog and I need your grace! I need your forgiveness and I want to be a part of your family."

Many of you here have already done that, but there may some of you who have never done that. That's called, "being saved." It's called, "becoming a Christian." If you have never done that that's something you can do anytime you are ready to make Jesus your Lord and Savior!

OUTLINE

I. MEPHIBOSHETH: PICTURE OF A SINNER

1. We are all born into the wrong family
2. We have all been crippled by a fall
3. We are all living in a barren land

II. DAVID: PICTURE OF SALVATION

God wants to give us:

1. His forgiveness
2. His fortune
3. His family