

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **God Requires Justice**

December 2021

Winter Quarter

**December 11, 2021**

## **Lesson #2 – Justice and Kindness**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – 2 Samuel 9:1-7, 9-12

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. *How can you move toward healing by helping another?*
2. *Why is it a bad idea to hold a grudge against the heirs or associates of a person who has persecuted you?*

***Key Verse: David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?—2 Samuel 9:1***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

In our arrangement of the Old Testament, 1 and 2 Samuel are part of the historical books (Joshua–Esther). They record the transition from being governed by the Lord (theocracy) to an earthly king (monarchy, beginning around 1050 BC). The man Samuel, after whom the books were named, was a pivotal figure: the last of the judges and the first of the prophets (see Acts 3:24; 13:20).

While Samuel was well respected throughout the land, his sons did not enjoy the same esteem (1 Samuel 8:1–3). The Israelites, tired of the abuses of Samuel's sons, demanded that Samuel give them an earthly king "like all the nations" (8:5). This flew in the face of God's desire for Israel to be a priestly, holy nation under His rule (Exodus 19:6; 1 Samuel 12:12–16). But the Lord did as they desired, choosing Saul to be king. But Saul did not faithfully carry out the Lord's commands (13:7–14; 15:1–35). The Lord rejected Saul and had Samuel anoint David to be Saul's successor (13:14; 16:1).

Though Saul was initially fond of David and took him into his court (1 Samuel 16:21–22), the king knew that David was chosen to succeed him (20:30–31). He grew fearful and even murderous when David's renown started to surpass his own (18:6–16, 25, 29; 19:9–10; 23:7–8; 26:1–2).

Yet for all of Saul's paranoid attacks on him, David consistently refused to harm or retaliate against Saul (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:11; 2 Samuel 1:16). In spite of his complicated interactions with Saul, David's most loyal and trusted friend was none other than Saul's oldest son, Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1–4). Their friendship resulted in a covenant that obligated both parties. Jonathan would protect and support David, while David pledged to show kindness to Jonathan's family (20:12–17).

Material in 1 and 2 Samuel is sometimes arranged thematically rather than chronologically. So the relationship between events in David's life can be hard to determine. This is especially true of David's ordering the deaths of several of Saul's sons (2 Samuel 21:1–9). It seems at first glance that the incident in 2 Samuel 21 must have occurred after our story (see 9:1a, below). But it also could have been

included in the latter chapters of 2 Samuel to fit with other stories about David's fallibility (example: 24:1–17).

Clues from the surrounding material place today's text some 15 to 20 years after David began his reign in 1010 BC. He had spent much of his time solidifying his control as king over all Israel by defeating enemies both within and without (examples: 2 Samuel 2:8–32; 5:6–25). Saul and Jonathan had been dead for some time (1 Samuel 31). Another of Saul's sons, Ishbosheth, ruled in the northern tribes until his own death, at which time David began his rule over all of Israel (2 Samuel 5:1–5). But the tribes had shown their preference for a descendant of Saul on the throne (2:8–9). In situations such as this one, it was often top priority for a king from a new ruling family to kill off all members of the previous king's household, thereby eliminating any rivals (examples: 1 Kings 15:29; 16:11).

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**9:1.** Chapters 9 and 10 highlight David's kindness. The growth of royal power did not conflict with the commitment David made to Jonathan and Saul's house years earlier, and he intended to carry out that promise. What else would one expect of a king who administered justice and righteousness for all his people (8:15)? The narrator opened the story with David asking a question: **Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?** The word "kindness" (*chesed*) is love, commitment, and loyalty pledged in the context of covenant agreements. David honored his covenant commitments.

**9:2–4.** Ziba was a man of high social standing, having 15 sons and 20 servants (cf. v. 10). He was responsible to care for Saul's estate. David asked him basically the same question he voiced in v. 1: **Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?** (v. 3). Ziba informed the king that there was one, Jonathan's son. He was lame **in both feet**. He was living with **Machir**, who evidently supported the house of Saul and who may have provided for Mephibosheth and his family. He must have been wealthy (Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 141). Later Machir was a great help to David also (17:27–29).

**9:5.** Learning of Jonathan's son, David sent for Mephibosheth and had him brought from Lo-debar (about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem) to Jerusalem. Without doubt, the disabled man thought David would execute him. Even though Mephibosheth was disabled, he was a male descendent of Saul, and one of Saul's sons could become a claimant to David's throne. Brueggemann says the mention of Mephibosheth's disability may have been added to show that he was not a military or political threat to David (Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 267).

**9:6.** Mephibosheth was not mentioned by name until here in v. 6. Years had gone by since the tragic events of 4:4. Mephibosheth was now an adult. He was married, and he had a son, who could have become a potential rival to David's throne.

Mephibosheth fell on his face before David, terrified. Humanly speaking, he had every reason to be afraid, especially since the events of 2Sm 21:1–14, the

execution of seven of Saul's male descendants by the Gibeonites, may have transpired at this time.

**9:7.** David eased his fears, promising Mephibosheth all of Saul's land. Saul's possessions became the royal possession of David (cf. 12:8). To return Saul's land to Mephibosheth was a risky move on David's part. But David did not stop there. He granted Mephibosheth a privilege reserved for his sons and other key officials in his administration. **And you shall eat** [lit., "eat bread"] **at my table regularly.** The expression "to sit at the king's table" (mentioned three times in this chapter in various ways: vv. 7, 10, 13) is an idiom for participating in the royal bounty, being sustained with the lavish royal sustenance of the king's table, and being the privileged to have a place at the king's table.

**LESSON NUGGET** – *This event illustrates God's kindness to us in Christ (Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4). As a part of the family of Sul, Mephibosheth had no claims on the kingdom; yet David treated him like one of his own sons. He did it for the sake of Jonathan (v.7) in order to keep his covenant (1 Sam. 20:12-16). God has saved us for the sake of His Son, a part of the eternal covenant of redemption (Eph. 4:32; Heb. 13:20-21). Mephibosheth did not need to fear (v.7) because David would keep his word. There was nothing to worry about! In the light of Ephesians 1:3 and 2:4-10, why should you worry?*

**Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary.**