



## **FOR JONATHAN'S SAKE**

**Kevin Presley**

Thank you for joining me for the program today. It's always good to be with you to study the word of God. For our sermon today, I want us to go back to the Old Testament and study from a story found in Second Samuel. Some of the greatest stories in the Bible are some of the shortest and most obscure. When we think about the life of David, we think about his fighting the mighty giant Goliath, or we think about his other exploits as King. We perhaps think about his transgression with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah and the horrible consequences that he brought into his life and the lives of others through his sin. There's much to study in the life of David.

The story I want to talk to you about today though, is contained in only a very few verses in second Samuel, but it's one of the most powerful stories from David's life. And it shows us the wonderful and gracious side of this man, whom the Bible describes as being a man after God's own heart. It involves a boy that was the son of David's dear friend, Jonathan. And I want to pick up the story in second Samuel, chapter four, and I'm going to begin reading in verse four. The scripture says, "Jonathan, Saul's son had a son who was lame 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 it happened as she made haste to flee that he fell and became lame. His was Mephibosheth."

I want to talk to you about this young man named Mephibosheth today and his father, Jonathan, and his relationship to the man who would become the great King David. Tucked away in just a few short verses here in Second Samuel is one of the most beautiful and powerful stories in all the Bible. It comes to us from the life of King David. David was such a great man. Now, like any man David had his faults and he had a great fall in his life. We're well aware of his sin with Bathsheba and he mercilessly had Uriah, her husband killed. But despite that the Bible characterizes David as a man after God's own heart. David actually had a very kind, generous, and magnanimous spirit (as is borne out in several episodes within his life) sometimes almost to a fault. But our story today, shows this merciful and kind side of King David.

We first meet David when he was just a shepherd boy and God sent the great prophet Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint little David to one day, be the king over Israel. He would one day succeed Saul to the throne. And when the Philistine giant, Goliath, was taunting Israel and Israel needed a hero. Everybody else was afraid to fight the giant, to face the giant. David in great faith, stepped out with his shepherd's sling and his little bag of smooth stones. And he toppled the giant, and immediately became Israel's hero. Well, King Saul wanted to know more about him. He wanted to interview him. And so young David is brought before Saul, and he speaks with him and takes him into his house and makes him a prominent member of the royal family. All started out well in the relationship between Saul and David. And the Bible tells us in first Samuel chapter 18 beginning in verse one. "Now, when David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan, who was Saul's son, was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took David that day and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul."

I don't think you will ever read or of a more beautiful example of friendship than the relationship of David and Jonathan. There was an instant bond between these two men, so much so, that the Bible says they made an agreement. They made a covenant with one another, to remain true and loyal and faithful to one another and each man's family as long as both men would live. I'm told that this phrase they "made a covenant" means they cut a covenant. And that brings to mind the picture of two boys who get out behind the barn or maybe out under a tree somewhere. And they decide that they're going to become blood brothers. They're going to make a pact. They're going to make an agreement. And so they take a little knife or a sharp stone, and they make just a tiny little cut in their hand or near their wrist until the blood barely oozes out. And then they take their hands and they rub them together and they mingle their blood together. And they say, "We're blood brothers." They've made an agreement. They've made a pact with one another. Well, what may seem like childish play to you and to me, was serious business in ancient times. And many a covenant was sealed with the blood of those making the covenant. And I believe that's what happened here in first Samuel chapter 18, as David and Jonathan seal, or make this agreement with one another as friends.

Saul of course, came to feel differently about David in the course of time though. David became Israel's hero because he had killed Goliath and they were singing the song: "Saul has slain his thousands, but David, his tens of thousands," and Saul couldn't stand that. He turned green with envy. He hated David then, and he was determined to kill David. And so, David had to flee, and he lived his life on the run. He was hunted down day and night by Saul and his men. It was a terrible period in the life of David that nearly destroyed him emotionally and could have destroyed him physically, but Jonathan never forgot his friendship and his love for David and David never forgot his promise to Jonathan and his love for Jonathan.

Jonathan died a premature death. He and his father Saul were both killed in battle on the Hills of Gilboa. And when news got back to the palace that Jonathan and Saul were dead, great fear ensued. That was a brutal time. And if a king was killed in battle, it was customary for the conquering king to then swoop down on the palace and to kill all the surviving members of the royal family to keep a legitimate error from coming back later and trying to reclaim the throne. And so, when word gets to the palace of what's happened to Saul and Jonathan, fear grips the palace and they're going to run for their lives. Well, Jonathan had a little five-year-old boy that he left behind, a little boy named Mephibosheth. And when the news came of Jonathan's death, Mephibosheth's nursemaid goes running into his room and she picks him up and she's going to run for their lives. And somehow in all of the hurry, she stumbles and she drops that little boy. The Bible tells us that he became lame in both of his feet in second Samuel chapter four, in verse four. In fact, it's almost strange how that verse so randomly appears. It's

sandwiched among other details about other things. It just simply says that Saul and Jonathan died, that Mephibosheth in fleeing was dropped and he became crippled in his feet. And then the scriptures fall silent. We don't hear anything more about him or what happened to him. But come to find out he's been living and growing up over in the land of Lodebar in exile.

As the years pass, David finally assumes the throne as king and one day, David is apparently sitting around thinking about his dear friend, lamenting the death of his friend, Jonathan, all these years later. And he suddenly asked a question that shattered the years of silence and of the palace hall. It must have shocked the people who heard David ask the question who knew the history between David and the house of Saul. It's recorded in second Samuel chapter nine, verse one. David asked, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

I want you to know today that is a great gospel question. I want you to think about two parts of that question. First, David asks, "is there anyone?" "Is there still any to whom I can show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?" He remembered the promise. He remembered the covenant, the vow that he had made to his dear friend and now he's going to keep that promise. None of Saul's family did anything to earn David's favor. He is going to now keep the promise that he made to Jonathan. So he asks, "is there any?". He's not concerned about who it is. He just wants to find anybody of the house of Saul and bring them and redeem them and show kindness to them because of what he had promised Jonathan. He didn't ask, is there someone. He didn't ask, is there some brilliant, intelligent person that can serve me in some great way in my administration. He didn't ask, is there some mighty warrior who can come fight in my army and win great battles or be a great strategist in my military? He didn't ask any of those things. He simply asked, is there any? As I say, that's the question of the gospel. Jesus Christ came into this world asking that question: "Is there anyone?". Several generations after David, Jesus, the King of glory came walking down the starry stairway of heaven into a sin-crippled world asking: is there anyone? In fact, the Revelation closes in Revelation 22 and verse 17 with Jesus saying, "whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." You're included in that whosoever! I'm included in that whosoever. Whoever will come to Jesus Christ in humble obedient faith is part of that whosoever. Jesus one time told his disciples by way of parable and Matthew 22 and verse 9, "Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as you shall find bid them to the marriage."

Sometimes I wonder though, if the world does not hear the church asking the question, is there *someone*, not is there anyone. Is there someone from the right side of town? Is there someone from our socioeconomic background? Is there someone from our own culture? Is there someone we feel comfortable with? Is there someone who has just the right past, who's not too bad off? Is there someone? But that's not the question of the gospel. That's not the question of Jesus. It wasn't the question of King David. The question is: is there anyone? And the church is not a country club for spiritually elite people; it is a hospital for the spiritually sick and dying. King David is saying, is there anyone who is up and out? Is there anyone who is down and out? Is there anyone without peace? Is there anyone who is suffering? Is there anyone who's been destroyed by sin and by their foolish choices and by the life that they've lived? Bring them to the house of God, where they can find a new beginning. And that's the question Jesus asks today.

But then there's another part to that question. He asks: "Is there any of the house of Saul?" How shocking that must have sounded to David's servants who well remembered how Saul had treated David. Saul who hated me! Saul, who tried to destroy me! Saul, who chased me across the hills of Israel like a hound chasing after a wounded animal. Is there anyone of his house to whom I may show

kindness? But again, that's a picture of the grace of God. "While we were yet enemies Christ died for us."

And until you and I can love our enemies; to extend grace and to extend the gospel; to extend the opportunity of forgiveness to our worst enemy; we don't really understand the grace of God. We don't understand what the gospel has done for us. As one man said, "it's hard to practice something that you don't have down in theory." And when you understand how God's grace has lifted you and how undeserving you are and I am of God's mercy and his grace that he showed to us for his son, Jesus Christ's sake, then we'll show grace and mercy and compassion to the lost, and even our worst of enemies. Is there any of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness?

Well, when he asked that question, there was a bureaucrat by the name of Ziba who steps forward and says, "yes, we do know of one. There is a surviving member of Saul's household." They had been doing surveillance or reconnaissance. They knew about Mephibosheth, where he was hiding. And he says, "there is one son of Saul that is left. He has a grandson out there," but then he adds, "but he's crippled. He's lame in both of his feet." I can almost hear the sneering in Ziba's voice, as he tells David about this surviving member of Saul's family. He's not who you have in mind, David. He's not the beautiful people like we are. He's not from our kind of background. He's not really going to be of any great use to you. He's crippled. David didn't ask how bad is he? David didn't ask, well, what happened to him? How bad is he? David asked, where is he? Again, David didn't ask, is there someone he asked is there anyone? David was not looking for someone who could do something for him. He was looking for someone that *he* could do something for *them*. And the same is true with King Jesus today. He's not looking for people who can do things for Him. He's looking for people that He can do something for them. And that includes you. It includes me.

So, David tells his people to go get him. And so they go off to this place called Lodebar which, by the way, means barren pastures. Doesn't that paint a picture? He's living over here on this backside of nowhere. Here he is, the former prince, the grandson of the first King of Israel, and he is living his life as a pitiful spectacle over here. He's living in fear every day, that one day King David is going to find him and is going to cut his head off. His men come thundering up to the place where Mephibosheth is hiding. They take him and they put him in a chariot, and they send him racing back for the capital city to stand before David and how terrified he must have been as they went. They bring him into the palace, into the throne room before David and the Bible tells us that Mephibosheth just falls down before him. What else could he do? He was at David's mercy. David held the power to save his life or take his life in his hand and Mephibosheth knew that. And so, in humility, he falls before David and David says something that must have absolutely shocked him. He said, "fear not Mephibosheth, because all that you lost when the house of Saul fell, I'm now going to restore to you. I'm going to give you back everything that your grandfather and your father intended for you to have." And the Bible says that he is going to eat bread at the table of David continually. Mephibosheth can't believe it. Mephibosheth says, "Who am I? Who am I to receive all of this from you? What is your servant that you should look upon such a dead dog as I." But David said, I'm going to give you everything that you lost. Well, that's what redemption is all about. That's what King Jesus has done for you and for me. If we have obeyed the gospel, if we've had our sins forgiven, if we've come to Jesus in obedient faith, we've been given a seat at his table. Not because we deserved it, but because of a promise that God made a long time ago. To, one day, send His Son into this world to find, to reclaim, and to redeem we who were lost in sin.

What a wonderful day that must have been as Mephibosheth, for the first time, is brought into the royal dining hall with David and his family. Perhaps, the elite of the Kingdom are there for supper, Absalom,

Amnon, Tamar, perhaps Joab, the great military warrior of the Kingdom joins them for supper. Then you hear the awkward shuffling steps of the Mephibosheth as he's helped into the banquet hall and is seated at the table next to David. From the table up, he's just as beautiful as any of them but beneath the table is the twisted and crippled story of his past. And when you come to the table of King Jesus in obedient faith; when his blood washes your sins away; you become just as pure and clean and righteous and beautiful as the love of God and the blood of Christ can make you. And I like to think that maybe as they were passing the food, maybe as David reached for a loaf of bread or for a dish that maybe Mephibosheth caught a glance of a little scar in the hand of David. That little scar that had been made from that cut and healed up many years before and little, did he know that that scar told the story of his redemption and why he was where he was that day. And one day the redeemed are going to see Jesus. One day, we're going to sit with Him on high at that eternal table in His house in glory, as it were, and there'll be some scars in his hands. Those scars will tell the story of our redemption and how he brought us out of Lodebar and brought us to the palace, made us his children, redeemed us, and gave us back all that was lost in the fall of sin. What a wonderful story. And that can be your story today because the King is looking for you.

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