

Greatness: The Life of Israel's Greatest King and How Yours Can Be Better
2 Samuel 9
Virtue, Brotherly Affection and Love

Introduction: Last week we learned that,

Faith is not the passive reception of God's gifts in Christ but active, obedient participation in them.

After walking through 2 Samuel 8 and seeing the summary of the day-to-day grind of David's active and obedient participation in the gifts and promises God made to him, we flipped over to 2 Peter and saw what that looks like for us. Peter wrote,

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:3-9)

God has granted us something we have no access to apart from the work of Christ—His nature! Christ didn't die on a cross to give us access to some kind of material or financial reward, but rather to give us the gift of a life we were totally separated from—HIS! The divine nature of God, that is, the nature that is the opposite of our corrupt nature, is a life that we are incapable of living as sinners, but because of Christ we have now been graciously given the right to partake in it. We have been reborn with a new nature that is very much alive in us, but if we don't intentionally, actively and obediently enter the day-to-day grind of living in that nature; of intentionally "adding" it to our faith in all that Christ is, has done, is doing and will do, then our faith is totally worthless to us—"ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, we said,

The powerful experience of the divine nature is not achieved through religious works or traditions but through the day-to-day grind of laboring with the Holy Spirit to transform the quality of our character and actions.

If we want to experience the powerful life of Christ, then the **virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love** that distinguishes the nature of God must be what we actively labor with in Christ to be the defining description of our character and actions. Peter said if we don't, then there is literally no practical purpose to our faith in Christ at all; it does nothing for us or for anybody who knows us!

Now, when it comes to our study of the life of David we need to remember that when Samuel anointed David in 1 Samuel 16, the Holy Spirit filled David (1 Samuel 16:13) not only to empower David with the wisdom and ability to be King, but also to give David access to the quality of the nature of God as opposed to the corruptible nature we are born with. As such, just as David, if we are truly living in active participation with God and His work in us, we should see the fruit of His life in and through our life that demonstrates it. 2 Samuel 9 is one of those stories where we see this happening in David's life. Now, make no mistake, David is just like us. David is not Jesus; therefore, we will see David's disastrous failures in the day-to-day grind of faith as well, but in this chapter, we see a success!

Specifically, in 2 Samuel 9 we see a testimony of the quality of David's character and actions pointing us to the quality of the character and actions of the divine nature of God. It's one thing to be a man or woman of your word when doing so either benefits you or keeps you from a negative consequence of some sorts, but it's a whole other thing to be a man or woman of your word when it requires something of you to do so but offers you nothing in the way of a reward or even in the avoidance of something negative (i.e. if you don't do this then you will suffer a consequence). To be a man or woman of virtue, brotherly kindness and love no matter if I get anything out of it or not, is to be a man or woman living out the character and actions of God and 2 Samuel 9 is a very clear testimony of that in David's life.

Proposition: There are two parts to the story in 2 Samuel 9 that demonstrate a very clear testimony of the quality of the character and actions of God in David's life.

The first part of the story is in verses 1 through 4.

(1) David sought a way to uphold his commitment to Jonathan. (9:1-4)

- A. 1 And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"**
- B.** For those who weren't around when we studied 1 Samuel, you need to know that this was not a random question for David. Jonathan, one of Saul's sons was a ferocious warrior and highly talented leader in Saul's kingdom, so much so, Jonathan was the obvious heir apparent to Saul's throne. Jonathan and David were also deeply committed friends at a level that despite them being of no family relations at all, you would still rightly call them brothers. It was in this deeply unwavering brotherhood that Jonathan and David made a covenant with one another that went beyond simply protecting each other. In 1 Samuel 20, when Jonathan started coming to the realization that his father wasn't going to stop his efforts to kill David and that David was clearly the man God had chosen to be the next King of Israel, he asked David to promise to protect his offspring! Specifically, Jonathan asked David the following and David gave his word to do it,

Note: “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 20:15)

- C. So, fast forward to 2 Samuel 9. Saul and all his sons, including Jonathan are now dead and the kingdom is completely united behind David as King, but David has something gnawing at him. David loved Jonathan as sincerely as one could love somebody, and, as such, he had to know for sure if there was a child of Jonathan still alive to not only make sure that descendant of Jonathan was protected but also received the honor and blessing that Jonathan had demonstrated to David when he put his own life on the line to protect David from his father Saul. Therefore, he told his people to find out if there were any descendants of Jonathan still alive and they wisely went and found somebody who might know. The Bible says,
- D. **2 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." 3 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." 4 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."**
- E. Earlier in 2 Samuel, the author told us how this son of Jonathan ended up crippled. The Bible states,

Note: “4 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.” (2 Samuel 4:4)

- F. Now why is it important that the Bible has now told us for a second time that Mephibosheth was crippled? Well, it emphasized the quality of the character and actions of David we are about to witness. David literally had nothing to gain by showing kindness to Mephibosheth in that Mephibosheth was in no way a threat to the throne of David nor a particular asset either. Furthermore, nobody seemed bothered that David wasn't caring for Mephibosheth because nobody in David's court appeared to even be aware that Mephibosheth was alive. Additionally, they very likely had no idea of the vow David made with Jonathan, and as such, there would have been no expectation, or even thought, for David to seek out any of the descendants of Jonathan to bless. But nonetheless, David knew he made a vow to Jonathan, and it seems, up until this point, he hadn't made any effort to find out if there were descendants of Jonathan that he should have been caring for! Nobody was asking him about it, and it appears nobody even knew about it, but that didn't stop David from seeking to do the right thing

which at this point he had no idea what the positive or negative consequences would be, he just knew he needed to do it.

- G. "Some commentators today look for dark motives. D. F. Payne suggests that David wanted to make sure that he knew where any survivors were so he could keep an eye on them as potential rivals for the throne. There is no support whatsoever in the text of Scripture for attributing such unworthy ulterior motives to David and we are justified in asking how such an idea arose. The answer is that current critical scholarship theorizes that this is part of a so-called 'succession narrative' (comprising 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2) written many years later to justify for succeeding generations David's taking the throne of Israel for himself and his dynasty. The assumption is that the Bible's history of David is too good to be true. To be believable it must be interpreted as basically a cover-story to sanitize the nasty mixed motives of the king! This presupposes a sceptical and unbelieving attitude to the text as it stands, puts a premium on elaborate speculations about what is *not* mentioned in Scripture over against what it actually says, and leaves no room for the divine inspiration of the Word of God ... The Word itself paints a beautiful picture of David reaching out in godly compassion to the son of Jonathan. It is clear, that for David, this grew out of his love for Jonathan and the covenant that he had made with him many years before (1 Samuel 20:15–16). David had promised not to cut off his kindness from Jonathan's family, 'not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth'. David was concerned to keep his word to Jonathan, but there was more to it than that. What is 'kindness for Jonathan's sake' (9:1) is also 'God's kindness' (9:3). The greater intensity of the latter indicates that David regards this as a matter of faithfulness to God and not just to a man. This is to say that our promises and covenants to people are to be regarded with no less seriousness than if they had been made to God himself."¹

The second part of the story in 2 Samuel 9 that demonstrates a very clear testimony of the quality of the character and actions of God in David's life is in verses 5 through 13.

(2) David generously provided for Mephibosheth, knowing full well there was nothing for him to gain from Mephibosheth. (9:5-13)

- A. **5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 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." 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." 8 And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog**

¹ Keddie, G. J. (1990). *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel* (p. 76). Evangelical Press.

such as I?" 9 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. 10 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. 11 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. 12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. 13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

1. "Mephibosheth's place of residence is on the estate (בַּיִת, *bayith*, "house") of Machir in Lo-debar, which meant that he was almost as far to the northeast as possible from David's center of power in Jerusalem. For a time, this was a safe asylum for the last known scion of the line of Saul. But after David's conquests in southern Syria, Machir probably was compelled to become his vassal and was no longer able to prevent Mephibosheth's extradition. As for Machir, Ben-Barak has this to say about him: Machir, a notable of Transjordan, was among the supporters of the House of Saul. However, during the Absalom rebellion he emerged as a friend of David (2 Sam 17:27–29). Conceivably, it was David's benevolent attitude to Meribaal [= Mephibosheth] which changed Machir's position in this matter."²
2. "David rightly says to Mephibosheth, "Do not be afraid." Mephibosheth had every reason to fear being summoned to the court of the man whom his grandfather had tried to kill and who might now wish to eradicate him, the last male descendant in Saul's royal line. A military-political factor (David's conquests in the far northeast) brought about his extradition to Israel, but a religio-legal one (David's obligation to his oath to Jonathan) saved his life. The oath Jonathan required David to take protected his heirs from execution once David came to the throne. But there was nothing in David's oath requiring him to bestow confiscated Saulide lands upon Jonathan's heirs. Nevertheless, this was not just a case of spontaneous generosity on David's part, growing out of his love for Jonathan. It was a matter of Israelite law, which obligated David to restore royally confiscated lands once a legitimate heir appeared."³

B. David not only took Mephibosheth into his own house to make sure he was well provided for, but he also made sure all the lands that belonged to Mephibosheth's grandfather, Saul, were given to Mephibosheth as a means of wealth for him and his descendants. This was a twofold statement by David. He

² Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 374–375). Lexham Press.

³ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 2, p. 375). Lexham Press.

made sure to enforce the laws of inheritance in the Mosaic Law, but he was also making a clear statement of his brotherly affection and love of Mephibosheth's dad Jonathan.

- C. But here's where it gets even more significant. In doing what he did, David was not only protecting the heritage of his best friend Jonathan, but he was also protecting the heritage of Saul, the man who never relented in his efforts to kill David! So, in the end, this is not only a testimony of virtue and brotherly kindness but most importantly of love. It is a testimony of giving not only with no expectation of receiving anything but giving to one who has no ability to provide you with anything and doing so to the benefit of one who hated you!
- D. In addition, one could also argue that bringing Mephibosheth into his household to care for him as well as ensuring Mephibosheth's wealth and prosperity would continue on with Mephibosheth's descendants, could have actually bolstered Mephibosheth's son as a rival to inherit David's throne, but David didn't care. David was secure in who he was as a leader and more importantly confident in the promises of God, so much so, he could bless and honor Mephibosheth without hesitation!
- E. **5 For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. 6 He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. 7 On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. 8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:5-8)**
- F. When you and I know who we are in Christ; when we are convinced Christ has secured our access to the full favor of God for all eternity; when we are convinced that eternal life is ours forever and that we have the opportunity to not live life enslaved to the death of the corrupt nature we were born with but in the power and freedom of the divine nature of God; then we can truly live empowered to be virtuous people filled with sincere brotherly affection and love!

Now there are so many directions we could go in the New Testament to dig deeper on all that I just said but for our purposes today I want to zero in on what we learn about the greatest testimony of virtue, brotherly affection and love and that of course is found in Christ.

However, before I do that, I want to clarify that my purpose in taking us to the passage I'm getting ready to show you in the Gospels is NOT to do what Jesus did in it. What we are about to read was a cultural practice of little to no relevance in our culture. As a matter of fact, for most people in our culture, there is a very good argument to be made that it would actually distract them from the message of the Gospel rather than to it!

So, the point in what I'm showing you is not for you to do what Jesus did in it but to understand what He was trying to point them to as He did it; as in the actual point of the passage, which is ironically the thing that is most frequently overlooked in it. There is no doubt that what we are about to read is a testimony of virtue, brotherly affection and love, but the biggest testimony of those character traits and actions is not in what Christ does in this story but in what He was telling them He was going to do!

Let's look at John 13:1-20.

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:1-5)

I need to point out a couple quick things before we continue on in this story. First of all, to those that are new to the Bible, you just heard me read that right—Jesus was washing the stink nasty feet of the disciples. And yes, if anybody had shoes in that day, they were sandals, not shoes! Therefore, as they walked the roads that were almost entirely made of dirt, their feet got extremely nasty. But in addition to that, at this point in the Gospels they are in the city of Jerusalem, and as such, the streets they would have been walking that day would have been ones with the urine and poop of horses, camels, sheep and goats scattered all over the place. Furthermore, it was the week of the Passover and the streets were slammed with people so it would be inevitable that you were going to step in something undesirable!

So, if you were washing the feet of a first century person in the city of Jerusalem you shouldn't imagine that being like the typical foot that shows up at the local pedicure place near you! The feet of these disciples were as dirty and disgusting as you could imagine a foot to be, which is why such a task was typically never performed by anyone other than a hired servant. It was considered to be one of the lowliest jobs a person could be hired to do.

But second, it also can't be missed that Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples. This included Peter, who could not imagine every betraying Christ, but knew he would do so that very night. It also included Judas whom Jesus knew had already determined to arrange His arrest. Jesus washed all their feet including these two! You can't label that with anything other than the pinnacle of virtue, brotherly affection and love!

Nobody had any clue about what would happen with Peter and Judas, but not knowing didn't mean that what Jesus was doing didn't cause all of them to feel extremely awkward. However, the awkwardness isn't for the reasons you might be thinking, but because they all

knew that if anybody should be washing somebody's feet, it should be them washing Christ's feet and not the other way around! However, nobody was willing to penetrate the awkwardness until it came to the one who never seemed to struggle with saying what he felt—Peter! The Bible records,

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." (John 13:6-20)

Ok, so Jesus made it clear that there was a very practical lesson for them in all of this concerning how they should live out the divine characteristics of virtue, brotherly affection and love with one another. However, verse twenty takes us to the ultimate point in all this, the point he made in verse 8 when,

8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." [and] Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." (John 13:8)

The point Jesus was making was that they could not be made righteous unless He did it for them and as such, they couldn't have the right to be sons and daughters of God unless He cleansed them of what kept them from it. It wasn't their dirty feet that made them outsiders to God and his life, but rather that they were sinners incapable of doing anything other than sin! Nothing they could do could purge them of that! There was no religious deed on the planet including any number of spotless animals that could be sacrificed on their behalf, nor any amount of blood sprinkled on them or poured over an altar to fully cover their sins enough to cleanse them of the corrupted nature that habitually sins. The only one who can give us a nature other than what we were born with from Adam is Christ, and therefore, Jesus said in verse 20,

20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. (John 13:20)

Jesus was saying to His disciples that He was going to send them out to preach who He is, what He had done, is doing and will do, and that whoever receives that message, and as such surrenders their life to Him, receives what He alone can do for them, which means they receive the Father and what He alone offers that is unlike anything in the Universe—the right to be His fully favored sons and daughters and as such have the right to His life forever! That same truth now applies to us. All who receive the message of those who preach the same message of the disciples today, that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as such repent and surrender their life to Christ, get the same thing as the ones who responded to the disciples themselves.

Gordon Keddie tied it all together this way,

“This is what grace is about—reaching out to bless even your adversary’s household, without your being asked, or their deserving it! David owed Mephibosheth nothing; Christ owes us nothing; but praise God that Jesus came to save sinners like us and that, by his grace, the Davids reach out in compassion to the Mephibosheths of this world ... Like Mephibosheth, lost mankind was crippled by a fall and has since been fleeing the face of the Lord’s Anointed. The world is a ‘Lo-Debar’ (no pasture) for the lost sinner, where he wanders with neither title nor possession, having no hope beyond his life ‘under the sun’ and the gloomy uncertainty of eternity looming beyond the grave ... We are reminded of the grace of Jesus Christ as he draws crushed and helpless folk to himself. He calls the blind, the halt and the maimed. He chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. He comes to the sinner’s weakness and makes it perfect in his strength. And as he wins men and women to himself, to repentance and faith in him as the only Saviour, he allays the fears of judgement with the promise of his blessings.”⁴

Challenge:

- (1) Is the quality of your virtue, brotherly affection and love encouraging people to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ you claim to believe or turn away from it?**

Note: The people around you are either seeing the quality of your character and actions and as such considering the validity of the Gospel you claim to believe, or they are seeing the lack of quality in your character and actions and concluding there is no reason at all to consider the Gospel you claim to believe! Which one is it?

- (2) As Mephibosheth embraced the grace of David, are you responding to the grace of Christ through repentance and surrender to receive what He alone can do for you?**

⁴ Keddie, G. J. (1990). *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel* (p. 78). Evangelical Press.

Note: Whether it was David's offer to Mephibosheth or Christ's offer to cleanse you of unrighteousness, neither is any good to the one who doesn't receive it! Will you repent and surrender your life to Christ right now so that you can finally receive what He alone can give you?