



FEED MY SHEEP

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David's covenantal mercy—we all begin as Mephibosheth! *Part 13—The Covenants of the Bible*

Our continuing study of the covenants of the Bible has brought us to the gripping and poignant tale of the covenant between David and Jonathan. So poignant is this story that I could not help but weep as I wrote it. In the previous issue we saw how the Philistines attacked the Israelites and in the battle Saul and three of his sons were slain, including Jonathan. Back at the royal palace, a nursemaid grabbed Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, into her arms and ran to escape the approaching Philistines. But in her haste she tripped on a cobblestone or something.

When she did, she might have landed on top of little Mephibosheth, or he might have gone flying forward out of her arms. In either case, as Mephibosheth hit the pavement, both his feet were crushed and he grew up permanently crippled.

But with no time to lose, the nurse scoops him up and she flees with him across the Jordan river where he is raised to adulthood by Saul's family and their servants. We would presume that he also lived *incognito*, that is, under an assumed name, in the obscure, little, desert town called LoDebar. It is very critical to also realize that for at least the last 13 years of his reign, King Saul had constantly reinforced to his entire clan just how evil David was, and that if "we don't kill him, he will eventually kill all of us."

Jonathan appears to be the only oddball in Saul's family. Jonathan just didn't fit the Saul mold. As far as we can tell, only Jonathan believed that David loved them and meant them no harm. But people will believe what they want to believe, won't they? ...Won't we? And it is no doubt part of our old Adamic nature, that we want to believe or we tend to believe bad about people rather than good about them.

Fast forward now to some time afterward when David is on the throne of all Israel. It is probably somewhat *more than 20 years* since the death of Saul and Jonathan. I say *more than 20 years* because, in the following incident, Mephibosheth, who was only five at the death of Saul, is now a full-grown man who himself has a young son.

During all those years, Mephibosheth, who had never known or even met David, has lived with this utter hatred for him. He has been taught all his life, that everything their family used to have, was stolen by the evil usurper, David.

Furthermore, every time Mephibosheth looks at his crippled feet, he chooses to blame David rather than the Philistines. If the palace nursemaids had not feared that David would kill them all, then they would not have been running and he would have two good feet. Oh, how he despises and hates the king!

All those years, Mephibosheth wondered if any of the family's servants would ever betray his location to King David, because if they did, Mephibosheth just knew that it would be all over for him...that he would be taken to the court and executed.

Hence, he had lived *incognito* all those years. None of the relatives had told Mephibosheth—or had even known about—of the covenant between David and Jonathan. Meanwhile, David had inquired from his subjects throughout the realm from time to time whether anyone still remained of the family of Jonathan. All those years, the former servants of Saul had been tight-lipped, also believing that it would mean a horrible death for any of Saul's descendants. And so one day, David tries again:

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

What is going on here? It is this: it is David remembering his solemn covenant with Jonathan. He had sworn to treat Jonathan's descendants with lovingkindness in perpetuity. But notice, David does not restrict the blessings of his covenant to only the line of Jonathan.

Good gracious sakes! Out of the goodness and mercy in his heart, David *expands* the blessings to the whole house of Saul! And then, as it happened, somebody finally did let David know that Jonathan still had a surviving son who had grown up out there in Boondocks, North Dakota—as it were.

2 And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

4 And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.

Let's put ourselves in the crumpled shoes of crippled Mephibosheth now. All his life, he has been told by his relatives and those who raised him that David is his enemy, and would kill him if he knew he existed.

If we think about it, when the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan came back to the palace, the panic and pandemonium may have been due not only to the possibility of the *Philistines* coming to execute the family. But, with the mindset of Saul's family being what it was, they could just as easily have assumed that as soon as *that traitor and outlaw* David hears of the death of Saul that he himself will seek to usurp the throne and in the process he will surely murder all of the remaining royal family.

My friends, that was how they handled things circa 1,000 B.C. But I will remind you that the same *modus operandi* has happened as recently as 1918 when the Bolshevik communists massacred the royal family of Russia.

Moreover, many people *today* wonder about the 1997 automobile crash in a tunnel in Paris which killed Princess Diana—whether that was truly an acci-

dent or was it perhaps an assassination?

Incidentally, the royal family of Russia, i.e., Czar Nicholas II, was the first cousin to the king of England and both were first cousin to the Kaiser of Germany. The royal genealogies of the those and other European monarchies have been traced all the way back to...? They all sprang from the loins of the very King David whose life we are reading about here! God is one awesome Script-ure writer, isn't He?

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.

We can imagine that on that day Mephibosheth hears the rumble of the royal chariots roaring in the distance and getting closer. As he grabs his crutches and ambles towards the window, he feels his adrenalin start flowing. He knows who they are. And he knows what this means. At the same time, he realizes that *resistance is futile*. He resigns himself to his inevitable fate. The dreadful day has finally arrived, he thinks to himself.

Someone has finally betrayed his identity and his whereabouts. Now he will be hauled to the royal court, probably tortured at length, and finally executed in a most heinous and painful manner. Therefore, when he arrives in the presence of King David, he figures that there is no point in being belligerent—that would only cause him to be tortured worse or for longer. So he sets aside his crutches and prostrates himself on his face before the king.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

This is it, thinks Mephibosheth. Now I will hear the horrible judgment of the king. How *long* will I be tortured? *How* will I be tortured? How will he decide to ultimately kill me? Will I be decapitated? Will I be run through with a sword? Will I be the target of ten royal archers? All these thoughts and more were going through Mephibosheth's mind in that gap of a few seconds before he hears the voice of the king making his reply.

7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

What! Mephibosheth is stunned! He cannot believe his ears. Surely this horribly evil King David is just toying with me now for his own amusement. Again, deciding not antagonize the king, and still thinking he was a dead man, Mephibosheth...

8 ~~And he~~ bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

Somewhere during that time, Mephibosheth is coming to believe that the king is *not* toying with him. That he is *not* lying about there being a covenant between the king and Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan.

Mephibosheth is thinking: Ziba is the servant who told David about my identity and whereabouts, and he is certainly *acting* like this is no hoax. Could it all be true? And while the following exchange is not in the Scriptures, we can imagine that it *could* have taken place.

...a scene where Mephibosheth, now believing David, says to him: "But you don't understand, my lord the king, how I have hated you, how I have spoken against you so vehemently, how I have run from you all my life, how I have made vile jokes about you with my friends and relatives. I do not deserve your mercy. I deserve to die. I do not deserve your forgiveness and compassion."

But then King David replies: "No, Mephibosheth, it is you who do not understand. I *know* how you hated me. I *know* what kind of person you *thought* I was. I know you have been hiding from me all your life.

"And do you know what? There is no way that you can make it up to me if you worked for me for the rest of your life. It is an unpayable debt. So I am canceling your debt.

"I am not judging you on the basis of what you have done against me or what you have thought of me. I am forgiving you and showing you mercy for only one reason. Because you were in the loins of your fa-

ther, Jonathan, when I made this blood covenant with him. See here is the scar on my hand."

When he sees the scar, Mephibosheth knows for certain that it is all true. He falls on his face weeping uncontrollably. He is shaken to his core. How wrong he has been to believe all those horrible things... about this king who loved his own father, Jonathan, so much that he shed his blood to covenant with him and swore by that blood that he would treat all my father's descendants with lovingkindness forever. How wrong I have been! But how thankful I am!

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

We mentioned in a previous part of this study that as we discover the various covenants in the Bible that not each and every step of making blood covenants was always recorded. That is because in Old Testament times, everybody was familiar with those steps, so there was no need to be that repetitious.

Thus in the passages which we have expounded concerning the covenant between David and Jonathan, we did not see all the steps recorded. Then there is one further aspect of multi-generational covenants which we are seeing played out right here, and that is that the heirs of the covenant have a choice.

When they are of age, and when they have been fully apprised of the terms of the covenant, each individual heir can choose to remain in the covenant or to reject it. There was no need of a new, individual covenant between David and Mephibosheth, because Mephibosheth had already been accepted by David on the basis of Jonathan's saying *yes* to the covenant a generation before.

However, Mephibosheth was now confronted with the choice of accepting or rejecting the covenant for himself. To make this clear, David was obligated, but Mephibosheth was not. He could go back to LoDebar and live in obscurity and relative poverty. But at least that way he could remain on the good side of his relatives and he could still hang around all his old pals who hated David.

Or... he could forsake his former life of negativity, of poverty, of wondering when the hammer was going to fall. His father, Jonathan, had sworn allegiance to David. In so doing, Jonathan had renounced his own right to rule; **and he renounced it for all his**

future generations as well. Jonathan had pledged that when David became king, that he would serve him.

This is why we can say that Mephibosheth is already bound by the terms of the covenant that was made by his ancestor even though each individual heir has a choice. You see, even if Mephibosheth rejects the benefits of the covenant, it will not change the fact that David will remain on the throne.

But with a statement of allegiance to King David, Mephibosheth can trade that entire former life of uncertainty, poverty and hatred. He can exchange it for a new life of being *adopted as the king's son*, of being given land and servants in abundance and of eating continually at the king's table.

Moreover, this would not only apply to Mephibosheth, but to *his* son as well. Mephibosheth would have to be dumber than a dozen eggs not to accept the covenant. So although we do not find Mephibosheth's words of acceptance recorded, we know for a certainty that he did accept, because the results are recorded.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

That is the end of the story of Mephibosheth, but it is not the end of the story as far as you and I individually are concerned. Because I trust the light bulbs were going on as you could see the parallels between that story and our plight today.

Let's lay out the parallels in detail. Most Christians, even baby Christians, understand how David is a type of Christ. We all believe that Christ is God manifest in the flesh. But the fact is that *everything* in the Scripture points to Christ in some way. David is not the only type of Christ. And so I am going to suggest we look at this story from this angle: Where David represents God the Father. We, of course, are all born of the family of Adam. In this story King Saul represents Adam. We are all born individually into the family of Saul. As such, we begin in spiritual darkness, where we are rebellious and determined to rule our own lives with our own free will.

In this connection, I reference the cover art of my book, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*, when I ask: Just who is in charge here? And as long as we remain in the family of Saul, we will always scream at heaven and answer: **I am!! I'm** in charge of my life.

You see, being of the family of Adam and Saul, we don't want to take directions from anybody, especially God. Therefore we live our lives beset by our old, carnal, Adamic nature. It causes us to be full of malice, envy, strife, bitterness and hatred, etc. We are like Mephibosheth, living in the spiritual desert wilderness, hiding from the King.

We have been hiding from the King all our lives. Many of us have been taught that the King is so hideously evil that He will torture us in flames of fire for all eternity. We have not known that the King wants love us. In this view, Jonathan represents Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus was *of* our family, the family of Adam and figuratively, the family of Saul, He was not *like* us. Like Jonathan, He did not fit the mold. He had none of the traits of Saul or Adam. As the soul of Jonathan was knit with David, in like manner, the soul of Jesus was knit with God the Father, because He loved Him as His own soul.

When we consider the totality of God—which our finite minds can never really get our neurons around—yet, we know the answer to this question: How many people, all summed together, could equal God? God is always greater than His creation, isn't He? So therefore, all the people who ever lived, all taken together, do not even come close to equaling God. Therefore, Jesus, being God in the flesh, could stand as our federal head in making a covenant. He could represent all of humanity, past, present and future. Just as we were all **in** Adam—in the loins of Adam; so also we were all **in** Christ, because He was our Creator. That is why Jesus is called “the last Adam.” What Adam could not do, Jesus did. And we all are beneficiaries of it—heirs of a covenant!

So, like Jonathan and David, Christ and the Father, made a covenant. God made a covenant with Himself. And because God took on the role of both parties, He was on both sides of the covenant, it becomes a win-win for all creation! Hallelujah!

(To be continued)

Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God by Dr.

James W. Bruggeman; 352 pages; seven appendices; index, bibliography: \$25 postpaid (and well worth it.)

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