

At the King's Table: The Story of Mephibosheth
Part 1 FORGOTTEN BUT NOT FORSAKEN
Sunday AM, April 18, 2010

INTRODUCTION

There are many Bible characters that we know much about. Such people are the subject of frequent studies and may even have whole books or chapters of books devoted to them and the lessons we can learn from them. There are other people mentioned in the Bible about whom we know very little. These people may only be mentioned in passing or are found in only one or two places in the Bible. Often, these people are overlooked, yet they appear in our Bibles for a reason.

John 20:30-31 tells us that Jesus did many things that were not recorded in the Bible. The things that were recorded are to strengthen our faith.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that everything in the Bible is from God and is for our learning. With this in mind, there can be no doubt that these little known, "forgotten" men and women of the Bible can teach us valuable lessons today.

MEPHIBOSHETH

In the book of **2 Samuel**, we can read about a man who was the grandson of a king and the son of another king's best friend. One might imagine that such a person could easily be arrogant and hold some power. However, this man was not like many power-hungry people of his day; he possessed a humble heart, a thankful spirit and contentment with his lot in life. Who is this exemplary character? His grandfather was King Saul; his father, Jonathan, was best friend with King David; his name is Mephibosheth.

1ST MENTION

The first mention of Mephibosheth is **2 Samuel 4:4**. "**And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.**"

Here we find that Mephibosheth's father and grandfather have been killed in battle. His nurse fears for his safety and quickly tries to run away and hide the boy. In her haste, there is an accident and Mephibosheth suffers an injury from which he never fully recovers.

2ND MENTION

The next time we read of Mephibosheth is in **2 Samuel 9**. In this passage, we find King David remembering past years. During his days in King Saul's service, David became friends with Saul's son, Jonathan. The two young men were so close that they vowed to care for each other and their families all their days (**1 Samuel 18:3; 20:42**).

David now inquires of his servants if any of Saul's household is still alive. Because of his pledge to Jonathan years before, he wishes to show kindness to any that may still be living. David learns from a former servant of Saul's that Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, is still living and David sends for him to be brought before him.

CHARACTER TRAITS

On this occasion, we see some of the fine character traits of Mephibosheth.

Consider **2 Samuel 9:6-8**. “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! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew 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. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?”

Here Mephibosheth bows down to King David and shows him honor. This man is the grandson of a king himself. Were it not for his grandfather's disobedience to God (**1 Samuel 15:1-32**), Mephibosheth might have been king.

Yet, this former prince does not try to exalt himself because of his former station in life. He presents himself in a humble and respectful manner.

TEACHING POINT

We need to adopt this attitude of humbleness to be pleasing to God. God is our king and we need to be humble before him (**Matthew 18:3**).

Mephibosheth continued to show his great character in his discussion with King David. The king generously gives him back the land that once belonged to his family. In addition, King David sets some of Saul's former servants in place to care for the land while Mephibosheth is to see his every need met while he remains with David.

Again, Mephibosheth does not react as many in this world today might. He does not greedily demand more from the king; he does not indicate by words or actions that the gift is something he deserves because of his former status as royalty. Instead, Mephibosheth shows humility, respect and thankfulness.

TEACHING POINT

The New Testament clearly teaches us to have a humble attitude no matter what our station in life (**Matthew 23:12; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6**).

Verses like **Hebrews 12:9 and 28** show how we should respect our earthly and heavenly fathers.

1 Thessalonians 5:18, Colossians 1:12 and 3:15 tell us we are to be thankful. We need to be like Mephibosheth in these areas.

We can read of Mephibosheth in three other passages in the Bible. The first is **2 Samuel 16:1-4**. In this passage, King David is again fleeing for his life, this time from his son, Absalom. At this time Ziba, the servant placed in charge of Mephibosheth's lands, informs David that Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem in hopes of taking over the throne. Without considering the truthfulness of the charges, David grants Ziba all of Mephibosheth's lands. Later, David returns to Jerusalem after the threat of danger is past. He then inquires of Mephibosheth why he did not flee with the rest of the household. Notice Mephibosheth's answer in **2 Samuel 19:24-30**. "**And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?**"

And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king? And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.”

Mephibosheth is still the humble servant. He also demonstrates a lack of revenge for wrongs done to him. Many people would seek revenge against Ziba for the slander and stealing of this world's goods. However, Mephibosheth was more concerned with the safety of David than with his possessions. This great and honorable man remained humble, respectful and thankful even in view of the evil done to him. Not only did he not seek revenge against Ziba, he in no way rebuked David for not checking the facts.

Mephibosheth was content with what he had and with whatever decisions David made about his lands.

TEACHING POINT

We, also, need to learn that revenge belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:19).

Like Mephibosheth and the apostle Paul, we need to learn to be content with whatever we have (Philippians 4:11) and to be thankful for the blessings the Lord grants us (Matthew 6:33; Ephesians 1:3).

Mephibosheth was a man of great character. Though he could trace his family back to a king of Israel, he remained humble. He was generously given his father's lands, yet he did not greedily ask for more or demand what was “rightfully” his.

Though the king he served (David) ruled in place of his grandfather, Mephibosheth showed David great respect and reverence. When his lands were stolen by trickery, he did not seek revenge.

LAST MENTION

In all things, Mephibosheth was content with what he had and thankful for the blessings in his life. The last mention of Mephibosheth in the Bible is [2 Samuel 21:7](#).

Here David must choose seven men from Saul's family to satisfy a covenant that Saul broke with the Gibeonites. David spares Mephibosheth because of the covenant he made with Jonathan so many years before. Isn't it wonderful that this was a man with a character that deserved to be spared?

We as Christians would do well to take to heart the fine qualities of this “forgotten” man of the Bible.