

At the Table of Grace

The Singer, Part 11

2 Samuel 9

Two years ago, the Associated Press ran a deeply moving story about unwanted girls in the area of Mumbai, India. In fact, at birth, their parents or grandparents gave them a commonly used name – a name that sort of said it all. More than 280 girls had been given the name Nakusa or Nakushi – and it means, literally, Unwanted. District officials decided to do something about it and graciously offered the girls an opportunity to change their name in a public ceremony.

In a country that aborts hundreds of thousands of female babies due to, among other reasons, the financial costs of the dowry – where the average family will have to go deeply into debt in providing the wedding dowry. And then there are even religious reasons; only the son is allowed to light the funeral pyre and send their parents into the afterlife.

Having a daughter is often met with sadness at best, abandonment at worst. And hundreds of thousands of girls around that country, which are kept and reared by their families, are still reminded every single day that they are an unwanted burden.

This article read, “285 girls in this particular district where the idea of a new name was instituted, flocked to the renaming ceremony on this banner day – wearing their best outfits with barrettes, braids and bows decorating their hair.”

They lined up, expectantly, joyfully – I was able to see a photograph of at least a dozen of these girls – they were anywhere from 8 years old to 15 – holding their certificates that bore their newly chosen name.ⁱ

Can you imagine having the name, worthless . . . unwanted.

Can you imagine from your earliest memories, being nothing more than a burden to your family or caregivers – unwanted by society – cast off from any hope of normality.

If your mind is already running ahead of my sermon to the obvious spiritual analogy of the new birth – and our new name in Christ – hold on to your horses . . . we’ll get there eventually.

But let’s pause long enough to consider that one of the most glorious gifts of grace is having your status changed –

- From unwanted to chosen
- From worthless to priceless
- From enemy to friend
- From outcast to family.

Grace in biblical terms is a demonstration of love that is undeserved, unearned, and unrepayable.ⁱⁱ

In other words, the recipient of grace doesn’t receive it because he deserves it – or because he earned it – in fact, he not only doesn’t deserve it and can’t earn it, but he can’t even do anything to repay the giver for what it meant to him.

That’s why we call grace, amazing.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a good guy like me . . . that saved a wretch like me.

If it’s undeserved, it’s grace.

If it’s unearned, it’s grace.

If it’s impossible to repay it – it’s grace.

That gift of grace is about to be given in a public setting, recorded for us in **2 Samuel chapter 9**.

Let’s pick our biography back up and watch – and listen as David the Singer-King is about to sing – and demonstrate – Amazing Grace.

Notice verse 1. And David said, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”

Now if we took the time to review and returned to 1 Samuel, we would overhear David making a promise to both Jonathan and even to King Saul that when he assumed the throne he wouldn’t carry out the common practice of kings – basically – kill all the family members of the former dynasty.

But won’t happen! David and Jonathan had made a covenant together (*1 Samuel 20*); and David agreed that he would allow Jonathan and the relatives of the House of Saul to live.

But then Jonathan and Saul were killed in battle. You could imagine that changed everything.

And now . . . fifteen years later, you arrive at **2 Samuel chapter 9.**

David is victorious, settled in his kingdom, living in a cedar lined palace; served by a retinue of cabinet members; sovereign over a growing empire; every need provided . . . now it’s time to relax . . . and just polish your portrait.

Instead, this is the time he recalls that covenant of grace and wants to act it out.

Is there anyone left – literally, is there anyone alive of the house of Saul – why? **I want to show him kindness** – hesed, is the Hebrew word – covenant fidelity. The word will show up 3 times in this chapter – **verse 1, verse 3 and verse 7.** In fact, in **verse 3** it’s referred to as **the kindness – or grace – of God.**

In other words, I made a promise to Jonathan and I want to demonstrate that covenant of grace – because when I do this, I will be doing nothing less than what God has done for me.

And it’s worth noting that David does not ask here in **verse 1**, “Is there anyone qualified? Is there anyone worthy? Oh no, simply: is there anybody still living who can be the recipient of my grace?”ⁱⁱⁱ

That’s grace!

I’m quite sure this decision by David surprised his cabinet and office staff. This wasn’t a time when kings gave gifts; this was the time when they received gifts.

And even more importantly, now that his kingdom is secured, why in the world would he want to bring someone into his good graces that belonged to his archrival, the spear-throwing, promise-breaking King Saul? Things have changed – it’s time to move on.

One author, commenting on this text, was reminded of the time when Franklin Roosevelt made

a speech in Pittsburgh in 1932 as he campaigned for the presidency. In that speech he clearly committed to restraining government spending. He thumped the podium and made promises that should he be in the White House, government spending would decrease. Four years later, winning another term by a landslide, he was ready to take drastic financial steps that would involve spending millions of dollars, taking the country off the gold standard and increasing both debt and spending. He asked one of his advisors how he could manage an about-face without seeming two-faced. What should he do about his earlier promise? The counsel was straightforward and unapologetic – he was told, Deny you ever made that speech in Pittsburgh in 1932. Pure and simple – deny you ever said it.^{iv}

At the very time David could have slid his covenant of grace under the royal rug, it was now. Who would complain? In fact, who would remember? Even more, who would care!

Just deny you ever said it . . . why muddy the waters by shaking hands with some relative to the king who hated you?

But instead, David orders a nationwide search for any living descendant of the House of Saul.^v

And it doesn’t take long before they come across a guy farming on one of King Saul’s former estates.

Notice verse 2. Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to a 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.”

Now stop for a moment.

Ziba is one of those unsavory characters you encounter every so often. If this were a Broadway play, Ziba would come on stage wearing all black clothing – probably a cape – he’d be wearing pointy shoes and a long gold pocket watch chain would dangle from his vest . . . and every time he came on stage the music in the background would become sinister and foreboding.

There are several times Ziba shows up in scripture and every time he does, the words, deceiving opportunist should flash across the screen of your imagination.

Ziba was cunning. Somehow, and I’m sure David became suspicious, Ziba had managed to squirrel away some of King Saul’s royal land.

When the transition to David's reign had occurred, Ziba didn't volunteer his estate . . . perhaps he had hoped David would never find out.

Later in this narrative, you discover that Ziba had a substantial harem, fifteen grown sons, a large retinue of twenty servants and a vast estate that he managed in comfort and wealth.^{vi}

All that to say, if there's anybody in this demonstration of grace who doesn't want a relative of Saul to be found – much less restored – it would be Ziba.

There are always enemies of grace. To this day, the believer will never find it easy to demonstrate grace . . . there are those who hate the sound of it.

And for the believer, there is actually one arch-enemy of grace who hates the fact that we, the believer, have been restored by grace. He hates to see what was his, taken away. Freed by grace.

You can't help but notice how Ziba tries to discourage David from his quest – notice the *end of verse 3* again as Ziba admits – no doubt reluctantly, ***“There is still a son of Jonathan; [oh, but] he is crippled in his feet.”***

Why throw that last part in?

I would agree with one author who wrote, “He’s implying here, “David, you need to think twice before you do this; this guy’s not going to look very good in your court. He won’t fit the surroundings – your throne room – your beautiful new home in the capital city of Jerusalem.”^{vii}

David has clearly asked, “Is there anybody I can give the gift of grace?” And this conniving staff member of the former administration who’s been squatting on royal turf says, “Yea, there’s a son of Jonathan . . . but he’s a cripple . . . you really don’t want to bother with him . . . his name for years has meant “Unwanted” . . . “Unworthy” . . . you don’t want to mess with that kind of trouble – besides, he won’t be able to do anything for you in return.

The Ziba’s of the world never get it . . . they’ll never understand that grace is a gift of unworthy people.

I love David’s response – notice *verse 4*. ***“Where is he?”*** And Ziba effectively gave him the address. Notice – He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar.

By the way, Lo-debar means “no-thing”. Nothing.^{viii}

Others translate it, “no pasture” – barren, or obscure.^{ix}

So what you have ironically, is a crippled young man, hiding out in fear of the new King, living in no-where’s-ville.

It all began as the house of Saul fell in defeat and disgrace.

Hold your finger here and turn back *to chapter 4 and verse 4* where we discover how Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan was injured. Notice – ***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*** (by the way, that’s where they were killed in battle) – ***and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame.***

Given the fact that he’s 5 years old and able to run – more than likely she has taken him up in a cart of some sort – they’re perhaps galloping out of town . . . we’re not told, but perhaps Mephibosheth fell out of the cart or even off the back of a galloping horse . . . breaking both his legs or ankles . . .

When they arrived at their hiding place, the last thing they could do was call for a physician . . . the secret hiding place must be kept at all costs. Perhaps his legs or feet were improperly set and they never mended to where he could walk again.

Listen, if that isn’t the picture of the unredeemed, nothing is.

And it began with Adam and Eve, didn’t it? Fallen in sin . . . now spiritually crippled for life . . . even physically dying . . . nothing to offer . . . in fear of God . . . hiding away . . . and God comes and says, “Where are you?”

What grace!

And here in *chapter 9*, David who demonstrates the grace of God toward the undeserving. Ziba informs him, “There’s one living relative, but he’s crippled” and he quickly says to Ziba, “Where is he?”

Don’t miss this – only grace responds that way. After Ziba adds that little cynical footnote in *verse 3* that Mephibosheth is crippled, you would almost expect David to ask, “Well, how bad is it? How’d it happen? Can he move his legs, or is it just his feet? Listen, this changes everything.”

I mean, the palace isn’t in compliance with the Disability Act . . . maybe we’re going to have to build ramps and move rugs out and change the bathtub around and lower the windows and pay for physical therapy. I wonder what this is going to cost me?”

Listen, grace doesn’t hold back . . . grace is ready to be spent.

Like Paul said as he wrote to the Ephesians, ***“We have been redeemed through His blood . . . according to the riches of His grace which lavished upon us.” (Ephesians 1:8)***

He lavished upon us.

Grace is gift-giving that can hardly wait.

Grace is evident at Christmas time or at birthdays.

You don’t read off all the merits of your children or family members; your cards don’t say, “And because of what you did last October, you are now receiving this gift from me.”

No, they come unmerited . . . and with joy. You are excited to see their happiness when they receive your gift, right?

I can remember when our youngest daughter was five, we were celebrating my birthday and after the presents had been opened, she went and got one more gift. She told me she had picked this gift out all by herself. In fact, she had wrapped the gift box all by herself too, she told me. I knew it was true, because she had wrapped an entire roll of scotch tape around the box. She was literally jumping up and down with excitement as I finally got the box open. Inside was a pair of socks. But I recognized them . . . they were my socks . . . she’d gone shopping in my closet . . . I like that idea – my daughter shops and it doesn’t cost me anything.

She was dancing up and down and clapping her hands. She had given a gift to Daddy she had picked out all by herself.

Grace is a gift that can hardly wait to be given . . . it dances up and down . . . it claps its hands . . . it smiles from ear to ear.

It can hardly wait.

And David doesn’t tarry either . . . ***verse 5. And the king sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 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.” And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you – here it is – grace – loving-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 such as I?”***

Listen, there isn’t anything more worthless than a dead dog. Can’t hunt; can’t protect; can’t fetch;

can’t keep the neighborhood free of cats and other rodents; a dead dog can’t perform anything.

And that’s the point.

He had nothing to offer the king and we have nothing to offer God. We deserved nothing, had nothing, could offer God nothing and we were hiding, disabled, fearful, sinful – and He found us!^x

For by grace you have been saved, through faith . . . not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Grace goes above and beyond, by the way.

Did you notice what David added? He had promised Jonathan and Saul that he would not put their household to death when he assumed the throne. He would let them live.

David is doing a lot more than allowing Mephibosheth to live!

Did you notice – ***verse 7*** – you get all your grandfather’s personal property back – and you’re going to eat at my table for the rest of your life – ***verse 11 says, “You’ll eat at my table like one of the king’s sons!”***

David effectively makes Mephibosheth a prince of Israel – a member of the King’s family.

What an illustration of grace. But as many as received Him – Jesus Christ – to them He gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

And if children, Romans 8:17 – then heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Four times in this text, David says, “Mephibosheth will eat at my table like one of my own children.”

Here in this courtroom of grace, David raises lame Mephibosheth up and effectively says, “You’re now a prince in the land – a member of my royal family – no more groveling on the ground – you are now to live in light of grace.

And it gets even better – notice ***verse 9. Then the king called Ziba – remember him? – 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.***

In other words, Ziba, you’ve been living off the king’s royal land that didn’t belong to you . . . well, I’ll tell you what; instead of arresting you for stealing and hanging you and your sons, I’m going to show you grace too . . .

You don't deserve it, but I'm going to let you stay on that land and keep working it and bringing in the harvest – you can eat all you want, but those servants that you made work for you; well, I want you and all your hotshot sons to roll your sleeves up and start working right alongside them because you're no different than they are.

And Mephibosheth can sell and buy according to what he determines that royal estate needs. But he's going to take up residence here in my palace and eat at my table in the meantime. However, he'll travel back and forth, so you need to move out of the master bedroom pronto . . . it belongs to him. You can only imagine Ziba's heart sinking to his sandals.

Talk about grace – and justice too.

Look at verse 11. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servants do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table

Can you hear the Good Shepherd in this narrative?

Mephibosheth moves from the barren pastureland of Lo-Debar to the green pasture of His Lord. He is taken from the valley of the shadow of death where he cowered in fear for years – but now he's brought into the light where a table has been prepared for him – he's now dwelling in the house of the Shepherd King.^{xi}

No longer carrying the name "unwanted" . . . there's been a ceremony . . . and his name and bearing and station and place is now "beloved of the King."

This is the testimony of the redeemed . . . those upon whom God has literally lavished His grace . . . and the best – the unmanageable splendor awaits us when He, our Shepherd King moves us into the Father's House.

Don't ever forget, Mephibosheth's disability will be a daily reminder of the King's grace. Every time he limped from place to place, from one step to the next, he was reminded, "I am in this magnificent place, because the King has kept His covenant promise and given me the gift of grace.

Likewise, our own sinful nature – our own limping from one day to the next – our own failure

to measure up; our own spiritual and mental and emotional and physical disabilities reminding us that we are not impressive . . . left alone we have nothing to offer God anything that would impress Him . . . these are daily reminders of His grace.

That's the amazing nature of grace. It's one way . . . grace is one way . . . all we do is receive it – and then, from sheer gratitude, attempt, crutches and all, to love Him in return.

One author painted the scene in David's dining room that next night – and every night thereafter.

The meal is fixed and the long come the members of the king's family and their invited guests. Amnon, clever and witty, comes to the table first. Then there's Joab, one of the guests – muscular, his skin bronzed from the sun, walking tall like the experienced soldier he is; next comes Absalom – talk about handsome! From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet there is no blemish on him; then arrives Tamar, the beautiful daughter of David and she slips into her seat; in a minute or two, in comes Solomon – he's been in his study all day, but he finally slips away from his work and makes his way to the table. There're all seated. But then they hear this clump, clump, clump, clump . . . and here comes Mephibosheth, hobbling along. He smiles and humbly joins the others as he takes his place at the table as one of the king's children . . . and the tablecloth of grace covers his feet.^{xii}

- From unworthy to chosen
- From worthless to priceless
- From enemy to friend
- From outcast to family

Can you imagine, one author asked, sitting as one of the King's children in His house, at His table one day. Feasting along with Paul and Peter and John; perhaps asking James to pass the potatoes; humming along with Isaac Watts; breaking bread with Abraham and laughing with Esther and Isaiah . . . and David.^{xiii}

. . . and . . . who's that? Mephibosheth . . . and you . . . and me.

No longer "unwanted" but invited; and the tablecloth of grace will cover our feet forever.

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- i *Adapted from, "285 Indian Girls Shed Unwanted Names" by CHAYA BABU - Associated Press October 22, 2011 9:43 PM*
- ii Charles R. Swindoll, David: A Man of Passion & Destiny (Word Publishing, 1997), p. 170
- iii Swindoll, p. 171
- iv Dale Ralph Davis, 2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity (Christian Focus, 1999), p. 119
- v W. Phillip Keller, David the Shepherd King, Part II (Word Books, 1986), p. 74
- vi Keller, p. 75
- vii Swindoll, p. 172
- viii Expositor's, p. 917
- ix Swindoll, p. 172
- x Swindoll, p. 176
- xi Adapted from Davis, p. 124
- xii Adapted from Swindoll, p. 178
- xiii Ibid