

CHAPTER 9

The only thing recorded in this chapter is the kindness David showed to Jonathan's seed for his sake.

- I.** The kind enquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth (v. 1-4).
- II.** The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him (v. 5-8).
- III.** The kind provision he made for him and his (v. 9-13).

1001 2 SAMUEL 9:1-8

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO JONATHAN'S SON

Here is,

I. David's enquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, v. 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born, v. 12. David had too long forgotten his obligations to Jonathan, but now, at length, they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to bethink ourselves whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The compendium which Paul gives us of the life of David is this (4136 Acts 13:36), that he *served his generation according to the will of God*, that is, he was a man that made it his business to do good; witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he does more, he enquires of those about him first (v. 1), and, when he met with a person that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, *Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness?* v. 3. "Is there any, not only to whom I may do justice (4088 Numbers 5:8), but to whom I may show kindness?"

Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. *The liberal deviseth liberal things*, ^{<2318>}Isaiah 32:8. For, the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are such as will not be frequently met with without enquiry. The most necessitous are the least clamorous.

2. Those he enquired after were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would show kindness for Jonathan's sake: *Is there any left of the house of Saul?* Saul had a very numerous family (^{<1383>}1 Chronicles 8:33), enough to replenish a country, and was yet so emptied that none of it appeared; but it was a matter of enquiry, *Is there any left?* See how the providence of God can empty full families; see how the sin of man will do it. Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, ^{<1010>}2 Samuel 21:1. But, though God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children, David would not. "Is there any left that I can show kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but for Jonathan's?"

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he would show kindness to his house with all his heart and was forward to do it. He does not say, "Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find some way to take them off, and prevent their giving disturbance to me or my successor?" It was against Abimelech's mind that any one was left of the house of Gideon (^{<1095>}Judges 9:5), and against Athaliah's mind that any one was left of *the seed royal*, ^{<1420>}2 Chronicles 22:10, 11. Those were usurped governments. David's needed no such vile supports. He was desirous to show kindness to the house of Saul, not only because he trusted in God and feared not what they could do unto him, but because he was of a charitable disposition and forgave what they had done to him. Note, We must evince the sincerity of our forgiving those that have been any way unjust or injurious to us by being ready, as we have opportunity, to show kindness both to them and theirs. We must not only not avenge ourselves upon them, but we must love them, and *do them good* (^{<1154>}Matthew 5:44), and not be backward to do any office of love and good-will to those that have done us many an injury. ^{<1189>}1 Peter 3:9, — *but, contrari-wise, blessing*. This is the way to overcome evil, and to find mercy for ourselves and ours, when we or they need it.

(2.) Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and therefore he would show kindness to his house. This teaches us,

[1.] To be mindful of our covenant. The kindness we have promised we must conscientiously perform, though it should not be claimed. God is faithful to us; let us not be unfaithful to one another.

[2.] To be mindful of our friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of the laws of our holy religion. *He that has friends must show himself friendly*, ^{<1824>}Proverbs 18:24. If Providence has raised us, and our friends and their families are brought low, yet we must not forget former acquaintance, but rather look upon that as giving us so much the fairer opportunity of being kind to them: then our friends have most need of us and we are in the best capacity to help them. Though there be not a solemn league of friendship tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a sacred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him that is in misery pity should be shown by his friend, ^{<864>}Job 6:14. *A brother is born for adversity*. Friendship obliges us to take cognizance of the families and surviving relations of those we have loved, who, when they left us, left behind them their bodies, their names, and their posterity, to be kind to.

3. The kindness he promised to show them he calls the *kindness of God*; not only great kindness, but,

(1.) Kindness in pursuance of the covenant that was between him and Jonathan, to which God was a witness. See ^{<884>}1 Samuel 20:42.

(2.) Kindness after God's example; for we must be merciful as he is. He spares those whom he has advantage against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to David was (^{<884>}1 Samuel 20:14, 15), "*Show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not, and the same to my seed.*" The kindness of God is some greater instance of kindness than one can ordinarily expect from men.

(3.) It is kindness done after a godly sort, and with an eye to God, and his honour and favour.

II. Information given him concerning Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an old retainer to Saul's family, and knew the state of it. He was sent for and examined, and informed the king that Jonathan's son was living, but *lame* (how he came to be so we read before, ^{<104>}2 Samuel 4:4), and that he lived in obscurity, probably among his mother's relations in Lo-debar in Gilead, on the other side Jordan, where he was *forgotten, as a*

dead man out of mind, but bore this obscurity the more easily because he could remember little of the honour he fell from.

III. The bringing of him to court. The king sent (Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem with all convenient speed, v. 5. Thus he eased Machir of his trouble, and perhaps recompensed him for what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account. This Machir appears to have been a very generous free-hearted man, and to have entertained Mephibosheth, not out of any disaffection to David or his government, but in compassion to the reduced son of a prince, for afterwards we find him kind to David himself when he fled from Absalom. He is named (~~<1072>~~2 Samuel 17:27) among those that furnished the king with what he wanted at Mahanaim, though David, when he sent for Mephibosheth from him, little thought that the time would come when he himself would gladly be beholden to him: and perhaps Machir was then the more ready to help David in recompence for his kindness to Mephibosheth. Therefore we should be forward to give, because we know not but we ourselves may some time be in want, ~~<1112>~~Ecclesiastes 11:2. *And he that watereth shall be watered also himself,* ~~<1125>~~Proverbs 11:25. Now,

1. Mephibosheth presented himself to David with all the respect that was due to his character. Lame as he was, *he fell on his face, and did homage*, v. 6. David had thus made his honours to Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, when he was next to the throne (~~<1111>~~1 Samuel 20:41, *he bowed himself to him three times*), and now Mephibosheth, in like manner, addresses him, when affairs are so completely reversed. Those who, when they are in inferior relations, show respect, shall, when they come to be advanced, have respect shown to them.

2. David received him with all the kindness that could be.

(1.) He spoke to him as one surprised, but pleased to see him. "Mephibosheth! Why, is there such a man living?" He remembered his name, for it is probable that he was born about the time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan.

(2.) He bade him not be afraid: *Fear not*, v. 7. It is probable that the sight of David put him into some confusion, to free him from which he assures him that he sent for him, not out of any jealousy he had of him, nor with any bad design upon him, but to show him kindness. Great men should not

take a pleasure in the timorous approaches of their inferiors (for the great God does not), but should encourage them.

(3.) He gives him, by grant from the crown, *all the land of Saul his father*, that is, his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Ishbosheth's rebellion and added to his own revenue. This was a real favour, and more than giving him a kind word. True friendship will be generous.

(4.) Though he had thus given him a good estate, sufficient to maintain him, yet for Jonathan's sake (whom perhaps he saw some resemblance of in Mephibosheth's face), he will take him to be a constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and does not appear to have had any great fitness for business, yet, for his good father's sake, David took him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was not one of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing too little that their friends do for them; but, on the contrary, speaks as one amazed at the grants David made him (v. 8): *What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?* How does he vilify himself! Though the son of a prince, and the grandson of a king, yet his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself *a dead dog* before David. Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences. If, when divine Providence brings our condition down, divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy. And those who thus humble themselves shall be exalted. How does he magnify David's kindness! It would have been easy to lessen it if he had been so disposed. Had David restored him his father's estate? It was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table? This was policy, that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth considered all that David said and did as very kind, and himself as less than the least of all his favours. See ~~ORIS~~ 1 Samuel 18:18.

2 SAMUEL 9:9-13

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO JONATHAN'S SON

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it (v. 9); and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, for his father was a mighty man of substance (¹1 Samuel 9:1), and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, (¹1 Samuel 22:7. Be it ever so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2. The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was and how to make the most of it, in whom, having been his father's servant, he might confide, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, v. 10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich, having much coming in and little occasion to spend, himself being kept at David's table. Yet he must have food to eat besides his own bread, provisions for his son and servants; and Ziba's sons and servants would come in for their share of his revenue, for which reason perhaps their number is here mentioned, *fifteen sons and twenty servants*, who would require nearly all there was; *for as goods are increased those are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes?* (¹Ecclesiastes 5:11. *All that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth* (v. 12), that is, they all lived upon him, and made a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him and doing him service. The Jews have a saying, "He that multiplies servants multiplies thieves." Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have abundance. "As *the king has commanded, so will thy servant do*, v. 11. Let me alone with the estate: and *as for Mephibosheth*" (they seem to be Ziba's words), "if the king please, he need not trouble the court, *he shall eat at my table*, and be as well treated *as one of the king's sons*." But David will have him at his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post as Ziba with his. How unfaithful Ziba was to him we shall find afterwards, (²2 Samuel 16:3. Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and son, his root and offspring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to illustrate the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan.

Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall. The Son of God enquires after this degenerate race, that enquired not after him, comes to seek and save them. To those of them that humble themselves before him, and commit themselves to him, he restores the forfeited inheritance, he entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him!*