

The Chesed Love of God

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[0:00] 2 Samuel 9. David asked, Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?

! Ziba answered the king, There is still a son of Jonathan.

He is crippled in both feet. Where is he? the king asked. Ziba answered, He is at the house of Machir, son of Amiel, in Lodibar.

So King David had him brought from Lodibar from the house of Machir, son of Amiel. When Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, Mephibosheth, your servant, he replied. Don't be afraid, David said to him. For I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan.

[1:35] I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And you will always eat at my table. Mephibosheth bowed down and said, What is your servant that you would notice a dead dog like me?

Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family.

You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for.

And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

Then Ziba said to the king, Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do. So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

[2:51] Mephibosheth had a young son named Micah, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet.

I have two stories to tell at the very beginning. The first you're not going to know, probably you're not going to know anything about it. It's going to be new to you. The second one you're very familiar with.

The first story is about B.B. Warfield. Maybe you've heard of him. Maybe that name rings the bell.

He was a very respected theologian in the 19th century, the 1800s, at Princeton Seminary.

We actually have several of his books in the church library. I don't want to talk about his theology this morning. I want to talk about his marriage. He married a young lady named Annie in 1876, and later that year they went to Germany.

It was sort of a honeymoon. It was sort of a chance for him to study. And so while they were there, they were out one day walking on a walking tour through some mountains in Germany, and all of a sudden a horrific thunderstorm came up.

[4:21] It's unclear exactly what happened. Either the storm was so severe and Annie went into a nervous breakdown, or she was actually struck by lightning.

Whatever happened, she never recovered. And for the rest of her life, she was more or less an invalid, unable to take care of herself. So for the next 39 years, B.B. Warfield loved Annie and cared for her.

The whole time, he could never leave her for more than two hours at a time. So his work in the seminary, his writing, his whatever else he had to do, two hours at a time, and then he had to go see about his wife.

One of his students noted when he saw them walking out around the campus together, the gentleness of his manner was striking proof of the loving care with which he surrounded her for 39 years.

Now, our next story is, you're very familiar with it, and I hope I'm not being inappropriate, but it's the story of Pastor Bob and Letty. And you know, for 10 long years, he surrounded her with his loving care, didn't he?

[5:40] I remember early in the stages of her illness when Letty was still up and around, and for some reason, I was at their house. And Letty, she kept asking the same question, over the same question over and over again.

It was something to do with green beans in the refrigerator. I don't remember exactly what. But what struck me, what stuck out to me so much, was every time he answered the same question, it was with the same gentleness, kindness, and patience, which he answered it the very first time. First time, second time, third time, fourth time, you could tell no tone, there was no difference in his tone of voice. It was the same gentleness. And so, you know, how he stayed by her bed and cared for her until the very end.

There's a Hebrew word for that kind of love. It's *chesed*. *Chesed*. I can't say it properly because it makes a sound in your throat that we don't make in our language.

It's committed love and kindness. It's promising love. It's the kind of love that obligates itself to the one who is loved, willingly and gladly obligating itself to that person in order that that person might stand secure in their love, in that love.

[7:09] It's the kind of love that we long for. It's the kind of love that we saw in those two stories. It's the kind of love that God tells us to give to others.

And it's the kind of love that God has loved you with if you're a Christian. It's the kind of love that lies at the very heart of who God is.

Stan quoted a tidbit of who God is. Remember when Moses asked, he said, who are you? I want to know. I want to see you. And the Lord came down in a cloud and he passed before Moses.

And the Lord said, the Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love, and faithfulness. The word love there is *chesed*.

The word love, that word, it lies at the very heart of who God is. If you want to know who God is, you want to know about this word.

[8:08] And so what is *chesed* like? What is God like? How has God loved you? How are we called to love other people? Well, 2 Samuel 9 tells us.

Tells us. And so, in this chapter, we see three traits of *chesed*. Three traits. Now kids, you know what a trait is. If you have brown hair, that's a trait.

If you're short or tall, that's a trait. If you have a good sense of humor, or you're very serious, those are traits. It describes what you're like. It describes what you are.

So, in this chapter, we see three traits for *chesed*. And we see the first in the first five verses. And there we see that it is aggressive.

It's aggressive. It's proactive. It takes the initiative. It goes after people. *Chesed* is not passive. It's aggressive. So it sets the table without being asked.

[9:11] Verse 1, look at it. David asked, is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness? That's our word for Jonathan's sake. So that word kindness in verse 1, you see it in verse 3, and then again in verse 7 is our word.

Chesed, is there anyone still left to whom I can show covenant, committed, promised, steadfast love, kindness, mercy for Jonathan's sake?

Now where did that where did this question come from? Well, it came from David's own heart. No advisor told him to seek someone from Jonathan's family, someone from Saul's family.

No wife suggested it. No one sought him out. No, it was the overflow of David's heart. And so out of that heart, he said, who can I show steadfast love to?

I need to find someone. And so he sends out an APB. Find me someone of Jonathan's family, of Saul's family. And at first they can't find a son, but they do find a servant named Ziba.

[10:21] And so they bring in Ziba. He gets brought into the court and the king asks him, is there anyone left? You know the family. Is there anyone else that I can show steadfast love, kindness to?

That I can show God's *chesed*. Now do you see it in action? *Chesed* in action. It's aggressive. It's not passive.

David doesn't wait for someone to show up on his doorstep to love. He goes and finds someone to love. And at first when he can't find someone to love, he keeps looking. He keeps looking.

So Ziba, you know Saul's house, you know their family. I'm looking for someone. I'm looking for anyone. Find me someone that I can show chesed to for Jonathan's sake. So what is chesed like? It's aggressive. It's aggressive. It's the kind of love that marks God. That's what his love is like. Did you see in verse 3 what David called it?

[11:23] It's God's kindness. God's chesed. Brothers and sisters, that's how God loves you.

Jesus came to the earth to seek and to save that which was lost. He didn't stay in heaven waiting for you to show up. He didn't stay in heaven waiting for you to come to find him. He went after you. And so he came. And when he came, he was always looking. He was always searching.

He has to go through Samaria. He has to go up to different places. He has to keep preaching. He's looking. He's looking. He's finding. And one day, he's walking along. The Lord Jesus is walking along and he sees a man up in a tree.

He's a wee little man. His name is Zacchaeus. And he's up in the tree. And he says, now do you remember what he says? Did Jesus wait for Zacchaeus to invite him to his house?

[12:28] Jesus was a very rude house guest. He said, Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house today. He didn't wait for Zacchaeus to invite him. He invited himself to Zacchaeus' house.

And I'm so glad that he invited himself into my life. He didn't wait for me to invite him because he never would have come if he would have waited on my invitation.

And at the end of the party, Jesus said, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and sisters, this is God's love for you. God's love for you. It's self-started. You like self-started employees and fellow workers.

You don't have to tell them what to do. They're always looking, right? They're always looking for something to do. That's what God's love is like. It's self-started, self-generated. He sought you and he called you into fellowship.

[13:27] He sent his Son to rescue you. He sent his Son to live for you and then to die for you. And then he sent his Gospel into your life.

And then he sent his Spirit into your life. And you were sitting there, eyes closed, heart dead, and he came and he gave you new life.

He did that because he loved you. He loved you. Now, how aggressive is your love, brothers and sisters? How aggressive is your love?

Are you on the lookout for people to love? Are you on the lookout for people to show kindness and mercy to? Well, that's what hesed does. Now, the second trait we see in this passage is that hesed is generous.

It's amazing, amazingly, surprisingly, generous. Now, years and years ago, before this story happened, David had made a promise to Jonathan.

[14:29] David had made a promise. You can find it in 1 Samuel 20. You don't have to turn there. Let me just read it. Samuel and David, or not Samuel, Jonathan and David.

Jonathan asked David, But show me unfailing love. That's the word. Hesed. Show me hesed like that of the Lord as long as I live so that I may not be killed.

And do not cut off your love from my family, not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth. Now, hesed means a lot of things. We've seen some of them. It means kindness and mercy and love and compassion, steadfast love, promising love, covenant love. But here, Jonathan means something very specific.

He asked David, When you become king, please don't kill me. And don't kill my family. When all of your enemies are put down and you have what God has promised, please spare me.

[15:32] That's the hesed that Jonathan asked for. And that's what David had promised to him. But is that what David did? Is that what David did?

He doesn't do the bare minimum. Think about what David could have done. He could have found Mephibosheth and just left him alone, left him alive. And that would have been keeping his promise. That would have been showing hesed to him. And that would have been enough. But that's not what he does. It's not what he does at all. Now, look at its over-the-top generosity.

Hesed's over-the-top generosity. So Mephibosheth comes in. Do you have your imagination turned on? Mephibosheth comes in and a big smile comes over David's face and he says, Mephibosheth! David is excited to see him. Parents, you know what that feels like when you have a present to give to your child and you know they're going to love it? And you can't wait to give it to him? Right?

That's how David feels.

[16 : 39] Mephibosheth! And Mephibosheth's afraid. He doesn't know what David's after, why he's called him. I mean, he's in a particularly dangerous situation from Mephibosheth's perspective. And so, he's afraid and David sees that and he says, Mephibosheth, do not be afraid.

Don't be afraid. He says, I will surely show you kindness. Now, literally, it says, in showing you kindness, I will show you kindness.

Which doesn't mean very much in English, but it means something very special in Hebrew. It means, it's Hebrew's way of intensifying it. And so, what David is saying is, don't be afraid.

I'm going to show you hesed with all of my heart. All of me for all of you. I'm going to do it with all that I have. And so, in a minute, in a sentence, Mephibosheth, everything that he lost when Saul and Jonathan died is restored to him.

They were probably pretty wealthy people, don't you think, Saul and Jonathan before they died? Well, they lost it all when they died. And now, in a moment, Mephibosheth gets it all. So, Mephibosheth, now, you remember where he was.

[17 : 53] He was down at someone else's house, living on, you know, someone else's house in Lodibar, sleeping on someone else's couch. But, he went from that to being one of the richest men in Israel.

That's what Hesed does. But that's not enough. David goes on, and you will always eat at my table. So, not only do you get all the stuff, you get to be a bonafide prince.

I'm going to treat you like a son. So, it's not good enough that you have all this material stuff. You're going to have friendship. You're going to have fellowship. You're going to be like family to me.

I'll be a father to you, and I won't stop doing you good, ever. Every day of my life, Mephibosheth, I'll take care of you.

Every day, you will enjoy my love, enjoy my kindness. But it's still not enough. He's going. There's still more to do. David calls Ziba back in.

[18 : 56] And he puts him in charge of all of Mephibosheth's new material, new estate, taking care of all of his property. Now, of course, Mephibosheth, remember, he's lame.

He's crippled. He doesn't, he can't take care of a huge estate. Not really. And so, David takes care of that, too.

Takes care of that. David didn't want his generosity to be a burden on Mephibosheth. He didn't want his love to be a burden on him. He wanted it to be a blessing.

Now, let me tell you what I mean by that. Maybe you're having a hard time understanding when someone's generosity could be a burden. But there are times when it could be. Now, when you're a young man, right, you hope and dream that someday, somehow, you will get a fantastic, super-duper sports car.

Right? That's what you dream. But something happens as you get older. You realize, yeah, if I had that Ferrari, it'd be great, but I can't afford the gas, can't afford the maintenance, can't afford the insurance.

[20 : 06] And so, you know, it would just be a big millstone around your neck. So, if one of you, in your generosity, bought me a Ferrari, I'd probably say, wow, thank you, and then turn around and sell it.

Why? Because I can't afford the insurance. I can't afford the gas. I can't afford the maintenance. If it breaks, who knows where I have to go to get it fixed. I don't think anyone in Plymouth takes care of things like that.

Your generosity would be a burden on me. But that's not how chesed works. It's generous, but it's thoughtful.

It's generous, but it's thorough. And it actually frees us, and it truly blesses us. Now, it doesn't enslave us to a whole other set of problems.

So, if you really wanted to bless me with a Ferrari, what would you do? Well, you would pay for a mechanic, too, and you'd pay for the insurance, and then you'd pay for the gas, and then you'd pay for the maintenance, and then when that one broke down, you'd promise to give me another one.

[21 : 12] That would be chesed. And that's what it's like. It doesn't enslave us to a whole other set of problems and concerns. And that's how God has loved you, Christian.

His love actually frees you. He doesn't want it to be a burden on you. He wants it to free you. He doesn't want you trying to earn his favor anymore like that, or earn his love.

He wants you to lift up the cup of salvation and enjoy it. What do you think David wanted from Mephibosheth? Do you think David wanted Mephibosheth to pay him back? No, he wanted him to enjoy the blessing. He wanted to see Mephibosheth sitting at the table with a big smile on his face enjoying David's love.

That would bring David joy. That would bring David satisfaction. He wanted Mephibosheth to enjoy David's company and David's friendship.

[22 : 21] He wanted to free Mephibosheth from concern, not put this huge burden on him and say, now you've got to figure out a way to make it up to him and pay him back. And brothers and sisters, that's what God wants.

That's what God's love is like. It's entirely gracious and generous. It doesn't burden us, it frees us and it doesn't enslave us, it actually blesses us, it puts joy on our tongues.

And if you're thinking about God's love and it puts a burden on you and think, I've got to pay it back, you're thinking about it wrong. And if you think about God's love and you're not rejoicing in it, then you're thinking about God's love wrong.

It's generous, it's gracious. How do you live under chesed? Well, it's not by works, it's by faith.

It's not by trying to make it up, trying to pay it off. It's by resting in it, delighting in it. Remember Zephaniah 3, I will sing, I will rejoice over you with singing and I will quiet you with my love.

[23 : 30] Quiet you. Give you peace and rest. Chesed is generous. How about you? How about you? I know many of you, many of you are excelling in this.

And I want to just say, excel still more. Okay? Excel still more. A dear sister, when we got back from Ethiopia on our second time, we were so tired of Ethiopian food.

It wasn't even Ethiopian food, it was like Ethiopian version of our kind of food, which just made it even worse. And I love the culture and I love the people, but they can keep their food.

7,000 miles is about right. And we were jet lagged. We were tired. Tired. Tired of this food. Tired of just, ugh.

We were really craving comfort food. You know? Home cook something. Home style something.

Well, a dear sister called and she asked, can we bring you dinner?

[24 : 41] And we said, sure. And she asked, well, what do you want? And my wife says, anything that's like Cracker Barrel. And she's like, okay, we can do that.

Well, at dinner time, the door gets knocked on and she's there and she starts bringing in dish after dish. And what's amazing is she only had like four hours to do this. But there was chicken with gravy, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, rolls.

I could be forgetting something. It filled our table and at the end there was this homemade blueberry pie. Amazing. It was so delicious.

It made our hearts sing and not for a minute did we expect that. That's what Hesed does. It's surprising over the top, generous. You excel.

Excel still more. Now third, Hesed is promise driven, not performance driven. It's promise driven, not performance driven.

[25 : 44] Why did David love Mephibosheth? Well, not because he was someone. Not because Mephibosheth earned his love.

Not because Mephibosheth did something great. Why did he love him? For Jonathan's sake. And again and again in this passage, David, this is what's on David's heart.

I will love you. I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan's sake. I'll do it for Jonathan's sake. Now what drove him to this over the top, outrageously generous love?

Well, it was his word. He promised. And so David did it. Now isn't that what we saw in our first two stories?

Why did B.B. Warfield take care of Annie for 39 years? Because he promised to. Why did Pastor Bob love Letty when she couldn't do anything for him?

[26 : 52] Because he promised to. That's how I said. It's promise driven, not performance driven. Now what do we know about Mephibosheth from this chapter? Well, we can only, we only have two or three points.

Two or three things that we know about him. First one is he has a son. He's been living in Lodabar.

That's two. And the most important thing about Mephibosheth is that he's lame. He's crippled.

And we get that right away, right from the very beginning. So Ziba is interviewing, or David is interviewing Ziba. And Ziba answers David, well, there is Mephibosheth, but he's crippled in both of

his feet.

As if to say, Mephibosheth, he can't do anything for you. He can't do anything for you, David. He's helpless. He can't help you. Or maybe, we could put another spin on it, and it's saying, you don't have to worry about him.

He's harmless. He can't do anything against you. Well, that's Mephibosheth. He's helpless. He doesn't have anything.

[27 : 57] He's living at someone else's house. He didn't do anything to win David's love, but for Jonathan's sake, David is going to love him every day of his life. And he's going to take him from Lodibar to the king's table.

He's going to take him from being a no one to a prince. Why? For Jonathan's sake. Mephibosheth knew he didn't do anything. He knew he wasn't anybody.

Who's your servant? I'm a dead dog. Chesed isn't performance-driven. It doesn't react.

It's not the reaction to someone doing something great or being something great. And that's good news. Isn't it? That's good news for dead dogs like us.

Now, a part of us doesn't like this for Jonathan's sake. Do we? It doesn't feel quite comfortable. It doesn't fit very well.

[28 : 56] We don't like being in love for someone else's sake. We want to win God's love to us. Don't we? Or we want to pay him back.

We want to win others' love by our actions. Or at least we want to earn our place once he gave it to us. And that's how the world's love works.

It's natural. It's fleshly. That's what tickles our selfish, arrogant selves. And it works as long as you do. It works as long as you can.

But when you come to the place where you realize that you can't do it, that you can't earn it, that you can't be good enough, then promise-driven love means all the world to you.

That you are a lame and that you're a dead dog, that's when you, when you get to that place, that's when promise-driven love, for Jonathan's sake, kind of love, means the whole world to you.

[30 : 08] So why does God love us? Why does He love us so thoroughly, so thoughtfully? Why do we wake up to mercies every day? Why does He take us out of the pig pen and put us at the table?

Why does He forgive us all our sins? Why does He send His Spirit and encourage us? And why is He so patient and kind?

And why, for the endless generations to come, will He show the full extent of His love and His kindness towards you?

Well, for Jesus' sake, Jesus is our Jonathan, isn't He? See, it's not because our Hesed is particularly good that He loves us.

It's because His is. It's because Jesus is. Jesus has sealed the deal. He sealed the new covenant in His blood and now I am forever bound to God and God is forever bound to me.

[31 : 11] And God will surely show me kindness with all of His heart for Jesus' sake. And that's the best news dead dogs like us could ever hear. Now, remember how we began.

Hesed obligates itself to the other person. It willingly, gladly, obligates itself, promises itself, commits itself so that the other person can stand secure in that love.

Poor Annie was so secure in Benjamin Warfield's love because he willingly and gladly obligated himself to her. He promised and he kept his promise no matter what.

So how secure are you, brothers? How secure are you, sisters? See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God and that is what we are.

Or Romans 8.32, He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him graciously give us not graciously give us all things?

[32 : 22] If He gave us Jesus, how will He not give us all the other things which are so much less than Jesus? That's the glory of Chesed. You're not good enough and that's okay because God has promised for Jesus' sake.

God's love isn't dependent on my obedience, on my performance. It rests completely on Jesus and so we are as secure in God's love as Jesus is.

We are called the children of God and He gave us Jesus. So, how then will He not give us all things?

What will He withhold from you? If He gave you what's most valuable to Him, how would He withhold anything else from you? Now think about what kind of freedom that gives you. Think about

what kind of freedom that gives you.

You are secure. People living like that and in the light of that, people living and thinking about I'm adopted, who are sitting at the table and rejoicing, who are having fellowship with God, those kind of people can love with absolute abandonment.

[33:40] They can love, they're free to pour out their love on others. You see, God's love powers our love. Now you can love without fear.

You don't have to be afraid of what they're going to do or how they might abuse you or how they might abuse that love. You can love without fear because you're safe in God's hands. You're safe in God's love.

So they might mistreat you, but you're safe in God's hands. I'll surely show you kindness every day. Now you can love without being loved back. See, if you need people to love you and the way that you're going to love them is if they love you back, you're going to be disappointed.

You're going to be brokenhearted. You're going to be desperate every day of your life. And pretty soon, you know what? You're going to realize it doesn't work. And you're going to stop loving them because it's not worth it.

But now, if you're secure in God's love, you can love without being loved back. Now you can love at great cost to yourself.

[34:48] You can endure a tough, difficult marriage. Now you can say no to yourself and yes to others. Why? Because God has so loved you.

And nothing can take that away. He promises. He promises. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much.

We thank you so much for your love toward us. Thank you that grace sets us free. Thank you that grace and your love compels us.

Compels us to no longer live for ourselves but for him who lived and died for us. I pray that this message that we have seen and heard from 2 Samuel that you would put it in our inmost places and convince us we're such diehard legalists.

We want to earn your love. We want to pay you back. not because we love you so much as because that tickles our pride that makes us into something.

[36:17] Give us the humility to rejoice in your love and to live in your love and to believe in your steadfast faithfulness and then out of that to live lives that are worthy of the gospel that reflect the gospel that as we see Christ in all of his glory we would be transformed into his image as our minds are renewed in this gospel that our lives then would be transformed and that as we no longer live in our old selves but now live in who we are in Christ that we would live then a new kind of life an obedient life a life of love help our faith then to breathe out to exhale love and perseverance and endurance that as we believe that we would so act and obey

I pray for those who don't know you pray that today would wake them up this message the spirit of God would wake them up show them that they can't earn God's love they can't pray that you would take them to Jesus to be their savior so we entrust ourselves into your hands we entrust ourselves to your promise so please bless us in Jesus name for Jesus sake amen amen