



29: Judgment & Mercy (2 Samuel 8-9)

What if the King you will one day stand before is both perfectly just... and unbelievably merciful? Today we see a powerful picture of judgment and grace through the life of David—pointing us to Jesus, the King who will either judge His enemies or welcome the undeserving to His table.

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teachingnotes

* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

☀ **Richard Niebuhrs** writes about liberal thinking which communicates that...*"A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross"*¹.

While God loves to extend His mercy, He is righteous to extend His judgment on any who would rebel against their Creator.

2 Samuel 8:1

After this, **David defeated the Philistines**, subdued them, and took Metheg-ammah from Philistine control.

The Hebrew "**metheg-ammah**" is a figurative expression meaning "the bridle of the mother city" and the parallel account in [1 Chronicles 18:1](#) seems to refer to the "mother city" of the Philistines - **Gath**.²

1 Chronicles 18:1

After this, **David defeated the Philistines**, subdued them, and **took Gath** and its surrounding villages from Philistine control.

The Philistines, who had invaded Israel over and over again; who had killed Saul and 3 of his sons, taken the city of Bet Shan ([1 Sam 31:8-11](#)) - are now **subdued**, never again to be a serious threat the Israel!

2 Samuel 8:2

He also defeated the Moabites, and after making them lie down on the ground, he measured them off with a cord.

He measured every two cord lengths of those to be **put to death** and one full length of those to be kept alive.

So the Moabites became David's subjects and brought tribute.

How could David randomly kill so many Moabites? These men had fought against Israel and could have all been killed. So while David does kill 2/3 of these fighting men - dismantling their military strength, he also spares 1/3 of them, likely allowing them to return to their homes rather than become slaves. Now as **David's subjects**, these men likely work the fields of Moab to produce grain and livestock, a portion as taxes that would be brought to David as **tribute**.³

In the middle of judging whether David was *righteous* or *wicked* in doing this, we must remember the judgment that is coming *from GOD in the future*.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 NIV God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven** in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might **on the day he comes** to be glorified in **his holy people** and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because **you believed** our testimony to you.

Our God, the God of the Old and New Testament, **IS a RIGHTEOUS JUDGE** who WILL judge all people - bringing **everlasting destruction** on those who disobey Him. May we never listen to the lie that 'God is loving, therefore God won't judge or send people to hell'.

¹ Richard Niebuhrs, *Kingdom of God in America*, 193.

² John Woodhouse, *2 Samuel: Your Kingdom Come*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 236.

³ Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, vol. 7, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 347.

2 Samuel 8:3-4

David also **defeated** Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when he went to restore his control at the Euphrates River. **David** captured seventeen hundred horsemen and twenty thousand foot soldiers from him, and he hamstrung all the horses and kept a hundred chariots.

Hadadezer means "**Hadad is [my] help.**" **Hadad** - an ancient pagan deity, a storm-god whose name means "The one who smashes." But this 'god' did not prove to be much "help" to the one who bore his name when confronted by King David.⁴

He hamstrung all the horses. David's hamstringing of horses caused them to be useless for any purpose, and likely led to their death. He probably did this for several reasons: 1) The Scriptures commanded the king not to acquire great numbers of horses ([Deut 17:16](#)); 2) Israelites weren't equipped to take care of large numbers of horses, large numbers of workers, lots of stables and much food; 3) Chariots and horses weren't very useful in much of the Israelite terrain of rugged hills & bushy forests; 4) These horses could never be used to wage war against Israel again.⁵

2 Samuel 8:5-6

When the Arameans of Damascus came to assist King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand Aramean men. Then he placed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became David's subjects and brought tribute.

The LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

Damascus is a long way away from Jerusalem, yet David is now in control of this area too! This is the portrait the author is painting for us. God is using David and the Israeli military **to judge His enemies.**

2 Samuel 8:7-12

David took the gold shields of Hadadezer's officers and brought them to Jerusalem. King David also **took huge quantities of bronze** from Bethah and Berothai, Hadadezer's cities. When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, he sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him because David had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Toi and Hadadezer had fought many wars. Joram had items of **silver, gold, and bronze** with him. King David also dedicated these to the LORD, along with the **silver** and **gold** he had dedicated from all the nations he had subdued—from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Amalekites, and the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

David saved these huge quantities of precious metals for the future building of Yahweh's temple under the leadership of his future son, Solomon. When it was time, David provided 3,775 tons of gold 37,750 tons of silver, and so much bronze and iron that it couldn't be weighed (1 Chr 22:14).

2 Samuel 8:13-18

David made a reputation for himself when he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in Salt Valley. He placed garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites were subject to David. **The LORD made David victorious wherever he went.** So **David reigned over all Israel, administering justice and righteousness for all his people.** Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was court historian; Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was court secretary; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief officials.

God's JUDGEMENT had been poured out on His enemies, but now God's MERCY & covenant commitment would now be demonstrated through David's life.

2 Samuel 9:1-5

David asked, "Is there **anyone remaining from the family of Saul I can show kindness to for Jonathan's sake?**" There was a servant of Saul's family named Ziba. They summoned him to David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "I am your servant," he replied. So the king asked, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family that I can show the kindness of God to?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still Jonathan's son who was injured in both feet." The king asked him, "Where is he?" Ziba answered the king, "You'll find him in Lo-debar at the house of Machir son of Ammiel." So King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.

Ziba wants David to know something significant - this grandson of Saul CAN'T do anything to endanger David or his kingdom. But, of course, David isn't searching for this young man to HARM him, but to BLESS him, to show him **kindness** for the sake of his father, Jonathan.

Do you remember this story from back in chapter 4? Mephibosheth was 5 years old when he severely injured his legs in a fall, fleeing from the Philistines. He had been hidden from others so that he wouldn't be killed, since he was in Saul's lineage to become king of Israel. Now the little boy is a young man around 20 years old, with no way to help heal his lame legs. And he approaches King David with humility and fear. After all, his grandfather, King Saul, had tried to kill David.

⁴ John Woodhouse, 2 Samuel: Your Kingdom Come, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 238-239.

⁵ Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 348.

2 Samuel 9:6-8

Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, **fell facedown**, and paid homage. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "I am your servant," he replied. "**Don't be afraid**," David said to him, "since I **intend to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan**. I will restore to you all your grandfather Saul's fields, and you will always eat meals at my table." Mephibosheth paid homage and said, "What is your servant that you take an interest in a dead dog like me?"

This young man doesn't have much self esteem referring to himself as **a dead dog**, something whose carcass would be thrown outside in a burn pile upon death. Yet David has taken an interest in Mephibosheth because of David's covenant with his deceased father, David's best friend, Jonathan.

Remember this conversation from years before - David & Jonathan made a covenant with one another.

1 Samuel 20:14-17 If I continue to live, show me kindness from the Lord, but if I die, don't ever withdraw your kindness from my household—not even when the LORD cuts off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." Then Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD hold David's enemies accountable." Jonathan once again swore to David in his love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

And now, David is doing exactly what he promised Jonathan he would do - **show kindness** to his family. And while Mephibosheth's worst was likely the day his Grandfather & Dad died - the same day his legs were damaged for life - THIS DAY must have been the BEST DAY OF HIS LIFE!!!

2 Samuel 9:9-13

Then the king summoned Saul's attendant Ziba and said to him, "**I have given to your master's grandson all that belonged to Saul and his family. You, your sons, and your servants are to work the ground for him**, and you are to bring in the crops so your master's grandson will have food to eat. But **Mephibosheth**, your master's grandson, **is always to eat at my table.**" Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do all my lord the king commands." So **Mephibosheth ate at David's table just like one of the king's sons**. Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. All those living in Ziba's house were Mephibosheth's servants. However, **Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table**. His feet had been injured.

Mephibosheth had no need to hide any longer! The King had invited him to live with him the rest of his life! It even seems that Mephibosheth's young son came to live with him there too!

➤ The real story parallels our story. That we too bow before a King, and although we are unworthy and broken, King Jesus extends His mercy to us, and through us, to others - first within our own family, and then to extend His mercy to others. His offer is not for us just to be His servants, but to be His sons & daughters, to be in His Presence from now and forever. This Merciful King reminds his followers that...

Luke 12:36-37

You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, **He will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them.**

The KING comes back to SERVE??? Oh what a day that will be! We will probably feel like Peter did when Jesus came to wash his feet - **UNWORTHY** to receive His MERCY.

But we dare not forget that **the KING OF MERCY**, is also **the KING OF JUDGMENT** - righteous judgment Who WILL come back to judge all people - including you and me.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 NIV

This will happen when **the Lord Jesus** is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. **He** will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Oh that we would stop running FROM Him and run TO Him!

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

Discussion questions

These questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your family, friends, or small group.

Judgment & Mercy

(2 Samuel 8–9; 1 Samuel 20:14–17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10; Luke 12:36–37)

1. God's Judgment - Read 2 Samuel 8:1–6, 13–14

- What phrase is repeated in verses 6 and 14? What does this reveal about who is ultimately responsible for David's victories?
- Why is it important that Scripture shows God bringing judgment on nations? What does this teach us about God's character?
- Which parts of this chapter make you uncomfortable? Why? How do we reconcile that discomfort with what Scripture clearly says?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10

- According to this passage, who will be judged—and why?
- What does “everlasting destruction” and being “shut out from the presence of the Lord” mean?
- How should this passage shape the way we view sin, eternity, and the urgency of the gospel?

Application:

- Do you tend to minimize or ignore God's judgment? Why?
- How should this truth change the way you pray for and speak to lost people?

2. Our Condition Before the King - Read 2 Samuel 9:1–8

- How is Mephibosheth described (physically and socially)? What limitations or disadvantages did he have?
- Why would Mephibosheth likely be afraid when summoned by David?
- In verse 8, why does he call himself a “dead dog”? What does this reveal about how he sees himself?

Application:

- In what ways are we spiritually similar to Mephibosheth before God? (see also Romans 5:6–10)
- Do you see yourself as someone who deserves God's mercy—or someone who desperately needs it?

3. The King's Mercy - Read 2 Samuel 9:9–13

- List everything David gives to Mephibosheth in this passage.
- Which of these blessings did Mephibosheth earn?
- What does it mean that he “always ate at the king's table”? How does this change his identity and future?

Application:

- How does this picture reflect what Jesus has done for us?
- Are you living like someone who has been brought to the King's table—or still like someone hiding in fear?

4. Covenant Faithfulness - Read 1 Samuel 20:14–17

- What promise did David make to Jonathan?
- How many years passed before David fulfilled this promise?
- What does this teach us about keeping our word and honoring commitments?

Application:

- Is there a promise or responsibility you've delayed or neglected?
- What would it look like to show covenant-like faithfulness in your relationships?

5. The Greater King - Read Luke 12:36–37

- What surprising role does the master take in this passage?
- Why would this have shocked Jesus' audience?

Application:

- How does this reshape the way you view Jesus—not just as King, but as Servant?
- Are you living alert and ready for His return?

6. Bringing It All Together

- How do 2 Samuel 8 (judgment) and 2 Samuel 9 (mercy) together give us a fuller picture of God?
- Why is it dangerous to focus on only one (judgment or mercy) and ignore the other?

Final Application:

- Which reality do you need to take more seriously right now—God's judgment or God's mercy?
- What is one specific step you will take this week in response to what you've learned?