

## The Table of Grace

2 Samuel 9:1-13

Years ago, a dear couple named Cecelio and Awilda started attending our church. After some time, they told me about their son Bert, who was serving a long prison sentence for a drive-by shooting that took the life of another young man.

He had already served ten years, with more than a decade still ahead. His father asked if I would visit him. That request came with a complication — I was a police officer at the time. When Bert learned that the person coming to see him was both a pastor *and* a police officer — and that I had actually been involved in the preliminary investigation of his case — he was far from excited. But out of respect for his father, he added me to his visiting list.

A couple weeks before the visit, Bert got into a fight in the chow hall and was placed in segregation. While there, someone gave him a Bible. As he was reading, Jeremiah 29:13 stood out to him: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” In those lonely hours, God began to show Bert that all his life he had been searching for identity — and that he would only discover who he truly was by discovering *whose* he was.

When we finally met face-to-face, we sat across from each other at a simple table in the prison visiting room. I asked him a simple question: “Are you hungry? Can I buy you a burger from the vending machine?” He said yes. As we broke bread together — eating vending-machine burgers at that table — something shifted. That small act of kindness opened a door. What began as an awkward visit turned into a gospel conversation. At that table, Bert gave his life to Jesus Christ.

Today, many of you know Bert. He was released several years ago and continues to walk with the Lord. What bridged the gap between a police officer and a prisoner? What opened the door for grace to break through? **It was a table.**

Today we begin a new four-week series called “**The Table: Finding Your Place at the King’s Table.**” Why are we devoting an entire series to something as ordinary as a table? Because the table is one of the most beautiful and recurring images in the entire redemption story of Scripture.

It begins all the way back in the Garden of Eden. In that perfect paradise, God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. They enjoyed unbroken communion and intimacy with their Creator. The garden itself functioned like a table where God provided everything they needed — physically, emotionally, and spiritually, as they delighted in His presence. There was no shame, no barrier, no separation. But sin shattered that fellowship. Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden, and ever since, humanity has been spiritually crippled, living in our own versions of Lo-debar (the place of no pasture), distant, barren, and alone.

Yet God never abandoned His longing to restore a relationship with us. Throughout the Old Testament, He kept setting tables as powerful pictures of His desire to bring us back. In the Tabernacle, God specifically commanded the Table of Showbread to stand in the Holy Place, just outside the veil. It was never to be empty. Twelve loaves represented the tribes of Israel, symbolizing God’s faithful provision and His invitation to commune with Him.

In the New Testament, Jesus — the Bread of Life — repeatedly sat at tables with sinners, tax collectors, and outcasts. He broke bread with them, declaring that the Kingdom of God had come near. On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and cup and gave us the Lord’s Supper — the beautiful sign of the new covenant in His blood.

After Jesus rose and ascended, the early church understood this deeply. Acts 2:42 tells us they “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer.**” The table wasn’t optional or secondary, it was central to their life with God and with one another.

And one glorious day, this story will reach its climax at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19), where every redeemed person from every tribe and tongue will feast forever in the presence of the King.

The table matters so much because the gospel is not merely about the forgiveness of sins. It is about restored fellowship and intimacy with God. God doesn't just pardon us from a distance — He seats us at His table as beloved children so that we might know Him deeply.

**Main Idea:** Grace — God's Riches At Christ's Expense — has made a place for us at the King's Table so that we might know Him deeply and become witnesses to His redeeming love and transforming power.

We will see this truth unfold in three principles from 2 Samuel 9.

### **Principle # 1: Grace Responds with Kindness, Not Bitterness**

After the death of King Saul and years of civil war, David is finally secure on the throne of all Israel. Most kings in the ancient world would have immediately eliminated any remaining threats from the previous royal family. But David does something remarkable and counter-cultural. He asks in 2 Samuel 9:1, *"Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"*

This question reveals the heart of grace. David could easily have become bitter. Saul had hunted him like a wild animal for years. David lived as a fugitive, sleeping in caves and constantly looking over his shoulder. Yet instead of revenge, he wanted to show, as he put it in verse three, *"Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?"*

Why would David do this? Because he had personally tasted the goodness of God's grace in his own life. David knew what it meant to fail miserably — adultery, murder, deception — and still be forgiven and restored by a gracious God. He remembered Jonathan's loyal

friendship and covenant love, a love that cost Jonathan dearly. That grace now overflowed from David's heart.

Notice the kind of kindness David wanted to show. This was not ordinary human kindness. Human kindness is usually transactional — given when someone has been kind first, or when we expect something in return. But God-like kindness flows from grace. It is extended to the undeserving and not just when convenient, but even when it's risky or will cost us.

David knew the house of Saul could still produce rivals to his throne. Yet he moved forward anyway. This is grace in action.

The Apostle Paul describes this same reality in Titus 3:3-7:

*“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient... But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy...”*

Paul is describing the very grace that David tasted and that we have received fully in Christ. And when we taste this same grace deeply and continuously, it does far more than respond with kindness — it goes out in search of the undeserving and seats them at the King's Table.

## **Principle 2: Grace Seeks and Seats the Undeserving**

David's servants locate Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and grandson of Saul. He is crippled in both feet and living in isolation in Lo-debar. Lode-bar means, the place of no pasture—a barren, desolate wasteland of scarcity, isolation, and hopelessness.

In that forgotten place, Mephibosheth lived as a broken man with no future, no provision, and no sense of belonging.

When he's brought before the king, he bows down twice in fear and reverence. First, David speaks words of mercy: “Do not fear, for I will

show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and you shall eat at my table always” (v. 7).

Then Mephibosheth falls on his face and says, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?” (v. 8).

Mephibosheth was the least likely recipient. As a young child, after Saul and Jonathan died in battle, his nurse dropped him while fleeing, leaving him permanently lame. He lived in fear and poverty, with no hope of claiming his inheritance. He had nothing to offer David.

Yet David sought him out, restored his dignity, returned his family land, and gave him a permanent seat at the royal table as one of the king’s sons.

This is a beautiful picture of the gospel. We, like Mephibosheth, were spiritually crippled by sin — living far from God in desolate places, alienated, hopeless, with nothing to offer. But Jesus, the greater David and our true King, sought us while we were still dead in our trespasses and sins.

*As Ephesians 2:1-9 declares, “But God, being rich in mercy... even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

On the cross, Jesus’ body was broken for us. The veil of separation was torn. Through His saving grace, the barrier of sin was removed. Now we are invited to feast on Christ, the Bread of Life. The Lord’s Supper is our regular reminder that we have a permanent place at the King’s Table by grace alone.

This is why the table is so central: it is the place where we come to know Him — to enjoy intimate fellowship with the One who sought us, saved us, and seated us.

Think about the night of the Last Supper. In John 13, we read about “the disciple whom Jesus loved” leaning back against Jesus at the

table and asking Him a question. This beloved disciple (most likely John) enjoyed a place of closeness with the Lord.

Grace opens the door for that kind of intimacy with Christ.

But we see the challenge of protecting this intimacy in the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10). Jesus came to their home — the front door was open, and He was welcome. Yet Martha was distracted by all the preparations. She was busy serving Jesus but missed the greater privilege of sitting at His feet and enjoying His presence. Mary, however, chose the better thing.

Daniel Henderson has wisely said that the greatest weapon of the enemy today is the weapon of mass distraction. The devil doesn't have to destroy us, he just has to distract us from what matters most.

And in our day, screens are one of the primary tools. Smartphones and social media algorithms are intentionally designed to keep our faces locked on the screen, scrolling endlessly, driven by dopamine hits. They compete fiercely for our attention.

Yet Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that *“we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”*

We become what we behold. If we constantly behold screens, we will be formed by the world. But if we behold Christ at His Table — through His Word, prayer, and unhurried presence — we will be transformed by His grace.

True holiness and intimacy flow not from striving but from drinking deeply from God's transforming grace every single day. And we only drink deeply when we refuse to cheapen grace—either by downplaying the seriousness of our sin or by trying to add our own efforts to it.

When we grasp both the enormity of our sin debt *and* the overwhelming generosity of what Christ has done for us, grace moves from mere doctrine to life-changing power.

### **Principle 3: Grace Produces Security and Freedom**

There is more to Mephibosheth's story that reveals the deep transforming power of grace. Later, during Absalom's rebellion, David was forced to flee Jerusalem. Mephibosheth's servant Ziba betrayed him with lies. When David returned, not knowing who to believe, he ordered that the land be divided between Mephibosheth and his servant Ziba.

But Mephibosheth's response is one of the most beautiful lines in all of Scripture: "*Let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home*" (2 Samuel 19:30).

Mephibosheth was willing to lose everything. Why? Because his experience of grace had gone so deep. A secure place at the King's Table had freed him from insecurity and the constant need to vindicate or protect himself. He loved the King more than possessions. He trusted God's sovereignty completely.

Mephibosheth stands in sharp contrast to Jonah, who became bitter and narcissistic because of entitlement. In the book of Jonah, the prophet obeyed outwardly, he finally went to Nineveh after his dramatic rescue, but his heart remained out of sync with God's heart. When the people of Nineveh repented and God showed them mercy, Jonah became angry (Jonah 4:1). He resented God's compassion toward a city he felt didn't deserve it.

Jonah's narcissism showed itself in self-interest and self-protection. He cared more about his own comfort, his own reputation, and being proven right than about the eternal souls of lost people. Because of a lack of brokenness over his own sin, and sense of entitlement, he wanted justice for others and grace only for himself and his nation.

A word of caution is important here. In our culture today, the word “narcissism” is thrown around carelessly — often as a quick label or even a diagnosis that can excuse sin. We must be careful. Labeling people this way can actually work against grace. The truth is, we all have a degree of narcissism in us. Our old nature is self-centered by default. None of us is completely free from it in this life.

As Paul Tripp explained: “The DNA of sin is selfishness. Sin inserts me in the center of my world. Sin makes me reduce the field of my concern down to my wants, my needs, my feelings... Sin makes me a little self-sovereign... The gospel is the only thing powerful enough to rescue us from ourselves.”

In a world that throws the word narcissist around so freely, we need to check our own hearts. So, let’s examine ourselves honestly today: What degree of narcissism is still in you?

- Are you a **one-degree narcissist** — where you catch it quickly and repent?
- A **two-degree narcissist** — where impatience and the need to be right show up more often?
- A **three-degree narcissist** — where you regularly focus on the flaws of others and become easily irritated?
- A **four-degree narcissist** — where you see the church mainly as a place that exists to serve you, rather than a people you are called to serve and grow with?
- Or a **five-degree narcissist** — where self-focus has become so normal that you barely even notice it anymore?

The less we sense our deep need for grace in light of God’s holiness and love, the more entitled we feel, the more impatient we become, the more we focus on the flaws of others, and the more prone we are to anger. We will view the church as a place that exists to serve us, rather than a people with whom we serve, grow, and put self-centeredness to death by the Spirit.

Again, when you are more like Jonah, you will be quick to see flaws at the table and slow to extend grace. But when you are more like Mephibosheth—when you have deeply grasped God’s grace—you will understand your need to sit with other spiritual cripples. There you will receive grace to grow and give grace so others can grow as well.

Saving grace does not mean we never struggle with self-centeredness; it means we have a new identity in Christ. We will fight this battle until heaven. But the more deeply we grasp God’s grace, the more secure we become, and the more we become the opposite of Jonah: generous, others-focused, and free.

The great reward of grace is not primarily material blessing, but heart freedom and intimate knowledge of the King. When you know you belong at His Table, you are liberated to enjoy Him fully and reflect His transforming grace to others.

## **Conclusion**

After explaining that we were once separated from Christ, the Apostle Paul declares, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

Those of us who have come to saving faith in Christ have been given a permanent seat at the King’s Table — a place purchased by His precious blood. We are seated positionally in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What an incredible reality!

And yet, in practice, many of us fail to avail ourselves of this position. We eat and run. We read a quick chapter of the Bible, utter a rushed prayer, and move on. We haven’t learned to linger in His presence or let the Word read us.

The Table is not just a symbol — it is a weekly and daily invitation to know Christ more deeply.

So today, will you take your seat? Will you fight the distractions, put down the phone, and linger at the Table? Will you let the transforming grace of God remind you that you are no longer a spiritual outcast in

Lo-debar, but a beloved son or daughter with a permanent place at the King's Table?

As you grow in knowing Him at His Table, you will naturally become a living witness to His transforming grace — just as Mephibosheth's life testified to David's kindness.

In the weeks ahead in our series we will see how this grace also creates deep fellowship in the church, strengthens our homes, and fuels our mission. But today, let this truth settle deep in your heart: There is a place for you at the King's Table because of God's rich, transforming grace in Christ.