

Lame Feet Under the King's Table

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to II Samuel, Chapter 9. This morning we are talking about fellowship, another of its aspects. Lame feet under the King's Table, is the theme, if such we were advertising. For in this we have set before us certain principles that are eternally useful and eternally true. I am beginning this series of messages with uncertainty in mind and heart as to how long the Lord will have them continue, but I am convinced, and increasingly so since we have begun, one of the most important areas in Christian experience is this of fellowship.

Perhaps we have an aggravation of problems here in the metropolitan area that others do not feel, but our people are scattered so widely from Montauk, L.I., to Morristown, N. J., and from South Staten Island, to Irvington, N. Y., and in the radius—or the circumference described by this radius, there would probably be 18 to 20 million people. You can recognize that with the great population, and the few people scattered so far that whenever we would get together any other time than on Sunday morning, there are problems of transportation, there is difficulty in communication, and the matter of sharing isn't that same as it would be in a small town and community at all. It is greatly aggravated.

We are grateful that there are two groups now meeting, one on Friday night that is set forth in the Bulletin, another meeting at the home of our Brother and Sister or elsewhere as it may be planned, but we recognize that we know relatively little about the matter of fellowship. Fellowship in the Biblical sense, fellowship in the sense in which it is set forth in Acts 2:42, "and they continued in fellowship."

You can't explain the vigor and the power and the success of the New Testament Church apart from the fact that there was a gracious sharing. But one of the difficulties that we find is that there is great difference in temperament and in personality. We recognize that all who come to Christ come on the same ground, the same doorway, the same threshold. One must come in at the door. "Behold, I am the door" (Joh. 10:9). And everyone that comes to Christ must come through Christ. This means repentance and faith. If you are a Christian, you came the same way as did every other Christian. You had to come bankrupt, because He only is able to help the tokos (Greek) - the broken, the beggarly in respect to the Spirit. And anyone that haughtily strode up to the door of salvation and said, My what a specimen I am, or what a splendid candidate for eternal life was turned away, because He has no provision made for any other than the lost, those who are lost in their own minds, and in their own eyes, and in their own heart.

If I am speaking to someone today that says, I can't go on, I am at the end of myself, my sin is like a mountain upon me pressing me into the pit, I am utterly hopeless, then my dear I would have you know that I have good news for you. The Lord Jesus Christ died to save such as you are. And this is the only kind of person He can save. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luk. 19:10).

And this means, therefore, that we have in the Scripture that was read a picture of one that was prepared for grace. Mephibosheth was lame on both his feet. He had been protected, he had been hidden, Jonathan's son, probably thought unworthy of notice and attention, and worthy to be killed. The Jews attached great importance to physical strength and vigor. You remember Saul stood head and shoulders above his generation, a mighty man, a valiant man. Jonathan was able to valiantly wield the sword and the spear, and Jonathan had a son that apparently from birth was lame in both his feet, and he was rather an embarrassment to his grandfather. Undoubtedly he was an embarrassment to his father to some degree at least, and so when David came to the Throne, and many of the family of Saul were killed, Mephibosheth was hidden, taken away, just no one paid any attention to him. He wasn't really worthy of anything.

And what a picture this is of you and of me, how ruined we were by sin, defiled within and without in mind and in heart as well as in word and in deed. Sinners were we. Remember, however that the Lord Jesus, in Luke 14, said, "God out into the highways and hedges and find the lame, and the halt, and the blind." And so when we find David calling for Mephibosheth, the one who was lame in both his feet it is similar to the Lord Jesus saying Go out and find these that are crippled. And it is hopeless people;

it is helpless people, for whom God has grace. The righteous need not a Savior, and the well need not a physician. And this is the reason why so few people today are coming to Christ in truth, because they are not lost.

How many times you have loved ones, and you know that if they die as they are with a god on the throne, they must be forever in hell. And you said, O God, save them. And nothing has happened for years and years. I said the other Sunday, You ought to be willing to pray, O God, slay them. Because they are not going to need a Savior until they are crippled in both their feet, until they have come to the place that they realize that there is a law in which they must walk, and a law in which they don't walk. And the reason lies as far as responsibility is concerned in their rebellious hearts. And when they come to this place of seeing themselves as God sees them, and then they are candidates for mercy. And are you courageous enough; are you confident enough in God's mercy and grace to pray this way? Are you prepared to say about your own children, O God, use any instrumentality that you need, but bring these children of mine in brokenness to the foot of the Cross? Slay them. Slay them.

Slay them? How do you mean? Physically? Well, of course this is so final. We are talking about the Spirit of God slaying them spiritually, destroying their confidence, destroying their self-assertion, and their self-sufficiency, pressing them by circumstances to that place where they are as Principal Maxwell of the Praise Bible Institute says, "Crowded to Christ."

I suppose if Mephibosheth had been a stalwart specimen of Israelitish manhood, capable of carrying the sword and the spear, he would have been slain along the way somewhere. But here is a man who is lame on both his feet.

And I am confident that if you had never been pressed by God to the place that you discovered that you were lost and consented to that lostness, and God's judgment upon you, you would have gone on in warfare against God, until finally you too would have been slain with the doom of Saul, damned forever. But God in His sweet grace brought you to the place where you knew your need of a Savior.

Has this happened to you? Have you come to that place in brokenness where, with the publican, down in the temple you could say, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luk. 18:13).

Then, if so, you realized that you had nothing to offer Him but your need, you had nothing to present but your guilt, nothing to bring but your uncleanness, nothing to set before Him, but the fact that you had lived in iniquity and sin, and deserved His wrath. How strange, isn't it, that as soon as you a hopeless, helpless sinner were pardoned, and forgiven, you to some degree at least forgot that you had been lame on both your feet. How quickly when our ankle bones are healed we can leap up in self-confidence and say, with the smug Pharisees, Thank God, I am not like other men are. And this is the thing that the Spirit of God would tell us today, that this fellowship to which we are called is a fellowship of the broken. The only ones that have any place at the banquet table of love are the lame who have not kept His law, and the halt, and the blind, and the deaf, and the crippled. These are the ones that found place at the table.

And isn't it strange, I say again, that since these are the only ones for whom He has made provision, that someone who has stood before Christ this way should afterwards turn and smugly look down his nose and say, O look. There's a blind person. I was only lame. How much worse it is to be blind. Or, there is a deaf person. I was only blind. How much worse it is to be deaf.

The thing I want you to see, dear friend, is this that God loved you when you were utterly unworthy, and you had absolutely nothing to present to Him but sin, and nothing to offer to Him but guilt. Where then comes the smugness and the pride that so frequently characterizes people after they have been forgiven? What have we other than what we received? Not one thing. This fellowship is therefore a fellowship to which the noble can come, because they crime in the same door as did the mean and common, and now that there is but one door, the common and the mean, the low born are no less noble than are the high born, and the noble, mean and common, for we have all come in by one door.

You recall, do you not, the occasion when D. L. Moody¹ was preaching in England and it made great stir, and touched not only the common people who heard him gladly, but also some of nobility. One occasion an invitation was given, and the Anglican

¹ Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

Church in which he was preaching had the altar filled, this time with broken hearted sinners claiming a Savior's love, and some one of the workers came to Mr. Moody and said, "Mr. Moody, Lady so-and-so is here, and she would like to speak to you quietly in the little room to the side, the vestry I believe they call it." And he went in, and she said, "Mr. Moody, I am deeply moved by what you said, and I know that I am though a church member lost, and I want to be saved. But Mr. Moody, do you see that man 4th from the left? He is my coachman, and though I know you are a democratic American, and you have no understanding of the problems we face here in Britain, and it would be most unseemly for me, Lady So-and-So, to kneel at the same place as does my coachman. What can I do?" He looked at her with great pity and said, "Madam, you can do as you seem determined to do, you can be lost forever." Then he turned and walked away. She said, "O Mr. Moody, I see, I see." And she went out, following him. And she went over and said to the one next to the coachman, "Would you make room please?", and knelt beside her coachman, and wept softly. And then, when he had found peace, and the witness of forgiveness, she said, "O Tom, pray for me," and in a few moments she had come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because she had been willing to come identically over the same threshold as her coachman, realizing that when you come to Christ, all other lines of demarcation are erased, and you come but as sinners, in need of a sovereign's gracious love.

Now do we see that? Do we recognize that all of us are Mephibosheths? We were all the descendants of Saul, we were all under the sentence of death, and we all were lame upon our feet, and the only reason that there is any mercy at all is because of a covenant that was made between the King and this man. And it is on the level of a covenant that there is mercy extended and grace offered. The covenant was not upon our worthiness, or upon our merit, but simply because the King made a promise to a man, and this promise He was willing to keep.

There was, we understand also, a great concern on the part of David for any of the descendants. For he stands to us as King Jesus, and may I remind you of this, that Mephibosheth was hidden, hidden behind his fears, hidden behind his past, hidden behind his unworthiness, hidden behind his certain doom. And if you think perhaps there was some greater wisdom in you that caused you to see Christ, remember that you are the blood descendent of Adam and Eve, and if you will understand that they were in the cool of the day, instead of on the path, in contrition waiting for their walking Lord, hiding in the place where the bushes were the thickest, the grass the deepest, and the shrubbery could they thought cover them from the all-seeing eye of the living God, it was God who sought them out. It was not Mephibosheth pleading for mercy with an injured sovereign, that had been denied by his cruel grandfather the throne that he had so long merited, no, no. It was David, sending out spies in search for him, that he might find Mephibosheth. And you hear it there in Genesis, the 3rd Chapter, "as in the cool of the day," the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the greater David, "walks the familiar path," saying Adam, "where art thou?" (Gen. 3:8) "And it was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved."² And with Mephibosheth, as, with you and with me, "how precious did that grace appear the hour we first believed."³ A yearning compassion on the part of David was that which broke the hold of fear, and the tyranny of dread that bound Mephibosheth. He knew not what would come. He fell on his face in brokenness. He fell there, in utter unworthiness, knowing that he was personally despicable, as well as in a doomed family, and should expect from an oriental monarch no mercy whatever. But instead of that he sees in the face of David great yearning, because of a covenant that he had made with Jonathan.

And so you come with your load of guilt and sin, and your uncleanness and your unworthiness, and you find in the face of your Heavenly Father, a great, great yearning, because of a covenant He made with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," He can, because the arrow that was aimed at your heart lodged in the heart of the Lord Jesus, and the sword of wrath that should have been sheathed in you was sheathed in Him. And He died that a covenant might be fixed with the Father, whereby God could have His yearning compassion legal, and right, and just, and He could die in your place and stead, that you might, by His death, be forgiven. O Mephibosheth, do you understand what it cost that you might be pardoned? Can you understand, dear sinner friend, what it cost that you might be forgiven, you who think lightly of God's grave, and have forgotten the price with which you were purchased, and smugly parade in self-confidence. Have you ever seen what it cost God to redeem you? The wounded heart of His beloved Son.

² "Amazing Grace" By John Newton published 1779

Come, come, Mephibosheth. If you think it is because of you that you sit at the King's table, because of some beauty in your face, or something in your person that has earned for you this right, you have lost sight of the fact that one day in the field David made covenant with Jonathan. And it was in a field where the eternal God made covenant with His eternal Son for such as you. And there He sealed that covenant with His Blood, and died for you. Do not ever think other than this, you who were and are lame upon your feet. Never think that it is for you.

But oh, see here the proper attitude, an attitude that ought to be the attitude of all who share the King's table. He fell upon his face, and he cried out, "O why can you look upon me a *dead dog*" (II Sam. 9:8). There is no term that a Jew could use more opprobrious to himself than this, than to call himself a dog, a dead dog. This is to take the meanest, lowest place that he can. And some might say, Well you see I have served the Lord. Yes, and He said when you have done your best works, then cry out, "Unprofitable servant that I am" (Luk. 17:7-10). And there is but one attitude that ought to characterize the child of God. It is all of grace, all of grace, all of grace, everything is of grace. And if you come on that basis, with a gracious bearing, because of the fact that you have seen that it is all of grace, there will be no room for pride in any day to come.

Oh, we sing it, but do we understand it? "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind, but now I see." You see, we have forgotten that word, *wretch*. But this characterizes us, but not so Mephibosheth. He had seen himself, and knew that he deserved nothing, and was amazed that there could be offered to him anything. And it was that he was to be spared from death, his heart was amazed. When he was pardoned from the sins of his family for which according to Jewish law he ought well have died, he was astounded. When it was said that he was to have restored to him the possessions that had been forfeited, he was overwhelmed. But when the King said, "Mephibosheth shall always eat at my table," he had no words to describe his heart, and so he fell upon his face (II Sam. 9:13).

Have you ever understood what it was to be placed in the Father's family as a child, as a son, as an heir, as a joint-heir with Christ, you who have been lame upon your feet from birth? Forgiven, we could comprehend. Spared from death, somehow our hearts can reach out to understand it. Something restored of time and life, and provision, this by straining our imaginations we can attempt to embrace. But oh my dear, when it is said that we have been placed in the Father's family as sons, as heirs, and as joint heirs, to always eat at the King's table, then we have passed the point where our little finite minds can comprehend such love, such wondrous love.

But see on with me still further. Nothing happened to Mephibosheth to change his crippled state. He always was as he had been. You see David loved him even when he knew the very worst about him. And he was accepted when he was crippled. Now my friend, if he could be accepted by the king, why couldn't he be accepted by me, and by you. Why must we make everyone in our own image? Why must we mold everyone in our own shape? Can't you accept the fact that this man is lame on his feet, but he is forgiven by the king, he is pardoned by the king, he is eating at the king's table.

My friend, I would impress upon your mind today that anyone who is accepted by Him ought to be accepted by you. And when you set up a standard other than His, you have arbitrarily doomed yourself to the utter isolation from Him, for that fellowship is to be on the basis of our fellowship with Him, and then with one another. Oh, how critical we are of this man because his eyes are crossed. You are irritated by crossed eyes. You do not like people that are cross eyed. And so, you criticize. Here is a man whose arm is short, and you do not like people whose arms are short. Here is a man who is lame. Do you mean physically? No. Here is a man who by his background and his personality will never speak with the English accent that you acquired through no choice of yours. Here's a man whose intelligence quotient will never measure up to yours. Here is a man whose personality difficulties and deformities won't be corrected even by grace. Here is a man, because of some limitation, is never going to be the kind of person you choose. And so how easy it is for us to become critical of David for having Mephibosheth put his feet under the table, how easy it is for us to become critical of the people whose "feet are under the King's table."

Fellowship, my friend, must be that willingness to accept what God accepts. For the moment that you try to make me in your image, or I try to make you in my image, we have ever ceased to have any grounds for fellowship. Can't you accept the fact that the King loved those who were not going to measure up to your standard, but they satisfy Him. Ought we not be prepared

to receive what He receives in understanding, in fellowship, and in love. Fellowship must be based on the fact that if we are accepted in the “Beloved, we are accepted by the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). Can we understand this?

Can we understand that perhaps this person in the body is always going to be just that way? Oh, how pitiful it is when people have to pick, and cut, and whittle, and change, and in so doing destroy all possibility of fellowship. It is wonderful to be part of a family, isn't it? and to be accepted by your own. This is a family, and we are to be accepted, and to be understood, and to be loved. What I want you to see is that David did not set a little table in the ante room for Mephibosheth, and he didn't spend all the royal jewels in trying to get his feet straightened, and all his days “Mephibosheth, sat at the king's table, lame upon both his feet.”

And there may be personality difficulties; you see, we have somehow become so obsessed by this absolutely non-existent average man, or average Christian, and the schools often - Universities and colleges - Christian and otherwise, have a mold, and they take the human stuff that is sent to them from Churches and home, and crowd, and cut, and trim, and press until they can get everyone out with the same broad smile, and the same broad tie, and the same snappy gait, and the same quippy tongue, and this somehow becomes the stamp and the hallmark of the trade.

My dear, God forbid us when we fail to recognize that there is no such thing as the average man. You are unique. There are certain things about you that your neighbor and friends are not going to appreciate, but you are you. And if you can accept yourself, and not try to tear yourself apart in areas where God is not concerned, and if your neighbors can accept you and not try to tear you apart in areas where God isn't concerned, if we can accept the fact of individual differences, in the Body of Christ, and understand and love one another without condescension, without saying, That is just...so-and-so, which is utterly destructive of human personality in the possibility of respect and happiness; the moment that you say, That is just so-and-so, you have completely obliterated all meaningful significance of their personality. If you can say, This is our..., and that is our..., Little Sophie. I never met her. Some of you did. Maybe she isn't what I thought she was. But I know enough of what she has written and said to know that she wasn't a very attractive human being from a physical standpoint. And every time the convention — it was the first day of the convention, that opportunity was given for a pledge, she would jump to her feet and shout Hallelujah three or four times, bouncing down the aisle to give Dr. Simpson³ her pledge. She was a washerwoman. And the pledge was always for a thousand dollars, and this was before 1910, so it represented about 4 or 5 times that amount in present currency value. And here is this little woman, bouncing down the aisle, eccentric and queer, but oh how she is loved of God, how she is loved of God. And she was received and accepted in the fellowship. “Lame in both her feet?” Yes, perhaps.

Out in Philadelphia, a dear sister, and from a very social family, but she came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, she was just as queer as an upside down crutch. The way she wore her hat, completely out of style, the way she dressed. But you know, I was so delighted when I came to Pittsburgh some years ago in Conference to find the esteem and the respect in which she was held, because they knew her, and they loved her. “Lame in both her feet,” probably would not fit into the home situation of some of them, but you see “she was accepted in the beloved,” and when you got to know her life, you found that she had probably the outstanding ministry of all the women of that fellowship. For her ministry in jails had become known throughout the whole region. Scores of children had been begotten of faith through her and established in a clear, honorable life in the Lord Jesus.

And so what, I am pleading for today is to understand that this fellowship into which we are called is a fellowship that accepts the individual difference, that are part of our personality and part of our nature, not seeking to mold into some previous stereotype as to how we should dress, and how we should look, and how we should talk, and to try and take the individual distinctive characteristics that are there, part of us, and change them. Oh, perhaps there will be changes made, but let them come from an inner relationship with Him, rather than trying to put Mephibosheth in a closet so he won't be seen. David didn't do that. He sat always, eating meat, at the king's table.

And again I say this, that this fellowship is in the beloved. We are accepted in Christ. We ought to accept one another. We ought to accept these individual differences and peculiarities, if you please, without being critical, and trying to understand

³ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

that there are differences between us. We are not the same, we are of this remarkable thing called a person, a unique combination of traits and tendencies that makes you utterly distinct, just as every snowflake is completely different in some wonderful characteristic from all other snowflakes, so you are not going to be shaped and molded until you are like everyone else. And if you want people to accept you, then you will have to be willing to accept others. And then there will be a willingness for us to sit, for we are all lame on our feet in some way, we all came as sinners; we all came with nothing but our guilt and need. We all came in our bankruptcy and our hopelessness. We all pled for mercy. You are in Him, and I am in Him, together we are in Him. There are some things about you that others do not like, some things about them that you do not like. But let's accept one another. When it comes to the matter, of sin, and then let us recognize that this is clearly set forth. But I have found that in Christian circles, in Christian homes, in churches, in mission ministries, so frequently the difficulty is not from some matter of sin. It is some matter of trait, or tendency, or personality difference. And we are not willing to accept the fact that "Mephibosheth is under the king's table with lame feet." Let's do that, shall we? Let's let there be a love that binds our hearts one to another and not try therefore to protect ourselves and the fact that we are in some respects completely different from others by calling attention to those differences they have. I believe that when we eat at the King's table and our eyes are on the face of the King, that we lose all awareness of Mephibosheth's lame feet. This is a fellowship with the King, in which together we sit, sharing the bounties of His grace, and our eyes are upon Him, that when we see Him — But if you study Mephibosheth too closely, be sure of this, Mephibosheth is studying you. And you call attention to His feet, he is going to call attention to your tongue, and from then on fellowship has ceased. But if you can forget about Mephibosheth's feet, and he can forget about your tongue, and you can look together into the face of the King and realize that the honor is not you but Him, and you are there because of a covenant that was made, then your heart is going to rest in the grace of the king, and you are going to accept the fact that if the King accepts you, you can accept each other.

Do you see? This is a fellowship with the King, in which we share, not our admiration of each other, but our love for Him, and our joy in His grace.

Shall we bow our hearts together in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we are all Mephibosheths, of the family under the sentence of death, guilty because of our crimes and our nature, with nothing to commend us to Thee but thy mercy and grace. Nothing to offer to Thee but our sin and unworthiness. Nothing to bring, our God, but our utter helplessness. And if we are here today as a company of people that can call themselves Christians, it is because one day in condescending mercy you heard the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner, and save me for Jesus' sake." Our Father, if we have been accepted in Thy sight, forgiven of the past, and pardoned from transgressions, washed in the Blood of Him who loved us, grant to us today gratitude to Thee, so that we are going to get our eyes off of Mephibosheth's feet, not going to look beneath the tablecloth to that which is hidden, and known to the King, but accepted by Him, that we are going to get our eyes off of one another, and the fellowship we have will be the fellowship, sharing the dainties of Thy grace and the provision of Thy love, and the presence of the King. O Father, we ask that somehow today there may steal into our hearts a sense of this glorious privilege of fellowship, one with another in the Lord Jesus, accepting one another, because we are accepted by Thee, and just resting in the fact that He knows and understands, and He cares. Give to us this, Lord, fellowship that is in Christ, fellowship that is with one another because we are in fellowship with Christ, eating at the King's table, and our eyes upon His face, "looking off unto Jesus, the Author and the Completer of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). If there be those, our Father, today that have been troubled because they have been staring at Mephibosheth's feet, rather than into the eyes of the King, grant that their hearts may be relieved. If there have been some, our Father, staring at their own personality angularities, diffidence, or uncertainty, or in a sense feelings of inferiority because they cannot do this or the other, grant, our Father, tender, loving release to their hearts, and that the thing that will give us our whole standing and status is not what we brought to Thee when we came, but what Thou hast given since we have come. Help us to realize, Lord, that it does not make any difference who our parents were. They were under the sentence of death. It doesn't make any difference what our possessions were. We had to give them all to Christ. Doesn't make any difference what our education and personality advantages were, because we had to count these things as refuse. Grant, Father, that our status may come today, that all of us can continually eat meat at the King's table. Nothing else has meaning. Nothing else has value. Nothing else has significance, but that we have been brought by birth into the Father's family, we can call Jesus Christ, elder

Brother, our Lord and our Savior, and call Thee Almighty God, Abba Father. Grant then, our Father, that with this we can call one another, Brethren, and rest in the fact that “we are accepted in the beloved,” and be content thus with this fellowship that is in Christ, not in the perfection and beauty of us, but in the perfection and beauty of Him who saved us, and who called us to Himself. Seal to our hearts the impressions and purpose, and grant, Lord, that as we leave there shall be a new tenderness, and feeling, and affection because we all are privileged to eat meat at the King’s table. Should there be among us those who do not know Him whom to know is life, might this be the day of opening their hearts and inviting Him in. In His Name and for His sake we pray. Amen.

Let us stand for the Benediction. Now may the love of God the Father, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, now and until we meet again, and then at His feet. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, November 11, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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