

February 12, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: The Life of David
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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GRACE RECEIVED, GRACE GIVEN
2 Samuel 19:16-43

The Dead Sea might be described as a sad geographical anomaly. The lake is about thirty-one miles long, nine miles wide and almost a thousand feet deep. The surface of the lake is 1,412 feet below sea level. The main source of water flowing into the Dead Sea is the Jordan River. Outlets from the lake do not exist. Herein does the problem lie. Because there is no outlet, the water simply sits in the lake until it evaporates. That creates a hyper-saline lake with a salinity level over nine times higher than the ocean. This high salinity creates a harsh environment all around the lake in which plants and animals cannot flourish. The area is bleak and desert like. Not the kind of place where most people want to live.

People can be like the Dead Sea. It is human nature to want more and more and yet never be satisfied. American culture has become like that in many ways. We have enjoyed unprecedented wealth as a nation. Most people in America live on a level that Solomon would have envied. He never had a smart phone, a tablet, a laptop, or used them simultaneously while he was watching his smart T.V. that was keeping a record of everything he was watching. Most Americans have way more than they need; and yet when the slightest thing in life does not go their way, they throw tantrums. It is ugly and no one wants to live around barren people like that.

But worse than people who are greedy for materialism, and yet never sharing, is people who have received God's abundant grace, but are not willing to give out that same grace. It makes us like the Dead Sea, which also has an odd odor about it. What kind of person would truly be forgiven by God, enjoy having sins forgiven, relish the

abundant grace of God, and then turn around and refuse to show the same kindness to others?

In this part of David's life, we see examples of good responses and examples of bad responses. David was well aware that God had been gracious to him. He was also the recipient of human grace as others had provided for him in a time of need. In turn, he showed grace to others. And other people who received grace from David passed it on to still others. But in the end of the story, we find a really sad, Dead Sea stinky kind of behavior from people who claimed to be God's people. They demonstrated jealousy, envy, and the self-centeredness of very small people. Childish immaturity is not becoming of people who have received God's grace.

David Offered Grace to Shimei (vv.16-23).

In God's plan, grace is offered abundantly when sin is confessed. In this story sin was confessed (vv.16-20). A couple of questionable characters were quick to meet the king. One of those fellows was Shimei who hurried to meet the king. *And Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet King David. And with him were a thousand men from Benjamin (vv.16-17a).*

As soon as Shimei heard the king was returning to Jerusalem victorious over the enemy who had run him off, he made hast to meet him. It appears that Shimei lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Hearing the news about the king's return, he very quickly made his way to the Jordan River at Gilgal, a distance of about twenty miles. This was the same Shimei who made a special point of cursing and slandering the king when he and his entourage were leaving Jerusalem, escaping Absalom. Now he hurried to meet the king because he knew he was in big trouble.

Actually, at this point, Shimei had two choices. He could run to the king and beg for forgiveness or he could run away and live in exile until the king died. Why did he choose to run to the king, humble himself before him, and ask forgiveness? Maybe (likely?) what drove Shimei to seek David's forgiveness was the grace David had already showed him when he prevented Abishai from taking off his head when he cursed (2 Samuel 16:9). That brief, passing

demonstration of grace might, no doubt, have lodged in the blasphemer's mind so that he suspected he would find grace again with David.

The story reveals that 1,000 Benjamites, people from Saul's tribe, also accompanied Shimei. Apparently, these people also had the desire to assure the king they were actually on his side in spite of how they had turned against him during the Absalom coup attempt.

Add to Shimei and the 1,000 Benjamites, Ziba, who also rushed to meet the king. *And Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan before the king, and they crossed the ford to bring over the king's household and to do his pleasure (vv.17b-18a)*. Why was he so anxious to see the restored king? Ziba had received the king's grace just recently, when David granted to him all of King Saul's estate, thus removing it from Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson. His haste to do all in his power to retain the king's grace might indicate that he had not been altogether truthful when he accused his master of subterfuge against David.

How different is God's grace to us! No one gains God's grace by cooking up a false story to make God feel sorry for us. God pours out His grace on us the moment we confess our sins against Him and ask Him to forgive us. There is nothing we can do to get more of it and nothing we can do to guarantee we will continue to have it. God's grace is as certain and constant as He is. Receive this, depend on it, rejoice in it, and praise Him for it.

Meeting David at the fords of the Jordan River, Shimei bowed before him, confessed his sin and repented. He offered a plea for mercy and grace. *And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was about to cross the Jordan, and said to the king, "Let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. Do not let the king take it to heart" (vv.18b-19)*. He bowed before David humbling himself because he recognized David's superiority. He admitted that David could punish him severely. He begged for David to put aside and not bring up his wrong actions.

This is much like what confession to God looks like. We will never have a reason to confess our offenses against God until we fear Him. Job understood God's way and said, *"Behold, the fear of the*

Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). The Psalmist knew, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111:10)*. Solomon knew from experience that *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverb 1:7)*. And that *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverb 9:10)*. We will never plead with God for mercy and grace if we do not first admit that He has the right, authority, and power to condemn us for eternity because of our offenses against Him. The purpose of the Law of God is to help us come to grips with our offense against the Lawgiver.

Now hear Shimei's confession to his superior and authority. *"For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king" (v.20)*. He admitted that he was guilty of doing wrong (v.18b). He acknowledged his sin. We can argue forever about the motivation behind this confession and whether it was sincere. We might even assume that Shimei was not sincere. If so, should David have rejected his confession? No. We must remember Jesus' instruction about the matter. *Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22)*. David responded according to Jesus' teaching and, showing grace, he forgave the offender.

Not everyone agreed that David should set aside justice by grace (vv.21-23). Some people seek justice in virtually every case possible. Abishai was one those people. *Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" (v.21)*. The sons of Zeruiah (Joab and Abishai especially) always seemed to be in favor of justice. And often, from the human perspective, they were right to conclude that someone had done wrong and should pay.

Such was Abishai's assessment of Shimei's crime. Shimei had done what was socially unacceptable and unethical. But also, he broke God's law which states, *"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exodus 22:28)*. Along with this offense,

God's general rule was that lawbreakers were to be "cut off" which generally meant execution. Therefore, Abishai's conclusion was accurate according to justice, and he was the man who was willing and able to make justice work.

David preferred grace at this time in his life. *But David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" (v.22).* At this point, David was confident in his position and authority as king of Israel. He knew that he could order the execution of Shimei whenever he chose. And he chose not to execute but to show grace in this case.

Therefore, because Abishai preferred human justice over divine grace, David called him an adversary. The English word *adversary* is the Hebrew word *saw-tawn*. It is often translated as the name Satan. That is especially true in the Job story where the word refers to the adversary, the accuser of the brethren, the opponent of God eleven times. To that end, David's retort to Abishai sounds a lot like Jesus' words in the New Testament. Remember what Jesus said to Peter when Peter also recommended human responses as opposed to divine grace. Jesus told the disciples that He needed to go to Jerusalem to be arrested and killed. He knew that this was the only way to provide the acceptable sacrifice for sins. God's grace would be made available for sinners only by this means. But Peter tried to persuade Jesus to act like a human and avoid the sacrifice, and thus prevent God's grace. How did Jesus respond? *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Matthew 16:23).* David, like Jesus, preferred to show grace.

Not only did David's rebuke of Abishai sound familiar to us, but also his conclusion for Shimei sounded familiar. *And the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath (v.23).* David had experienced God's grace. David acknowledged his sin, confessed his sin against God. God did an astonishing thing and set aside the rules of His own law to show grace to David. *David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).*

Shimei said to David, *"For your servant knows that I have sinned."* David said to Shimei, *"You shall not die."* His offer of grace to Shimei sounded much like God's offer of grace to him. That day Shimei received grace. On another day, for a different reason, he would receive judgment.

Mephibosheth Showed Grace to Ziba (vv.24-30).

Truth revealed is a blessed thing. We often rejoice when the other side of the story comes to light. Saul's grandson met the king in disarray. *And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety (v.24).* His trip to Gilgal (20 miles from Jerusalem) took considerably more effort than others expended. He showed up having the look of a man who had been mourning. Thus, he greeted the king.

As the story is told here it seems like at a later time, when he was back in Jerusalem, Mephibosheth explained what happened. *And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. He has slandered your servant to my lord the king (vv.24-27a).*

The man's faith in the king's grace is refreshing. He revealed that faith by the compliments he gave to the king. *But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?" (vv.27b-28).* Mephibosheth was confident David would perceive the truth and act accordingly. He truly understood his position as fully dependent upon David. His words serve as a beautiful and accurate description of our own condition before our Creator: "We are but people doomed to death, yet the King of kings set us servants among those who eat at His table." That is grace.

In response to Mephibosheth's faith in him, David demonstrated his undeserved favor. But first, it appears that he also offered justice. *And the king said to him, "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land" (v.29).* In a way, David was in an awkward position because he had already given everything to Ziba. The best he could do, and remain dependable in questionable circumstances, was to split the estate. That was justice, but it also offered grace to both Mephibosheth and Ziba.

But notice how Mephibosheth responded. He offered grace to Ziba who deserved far less than favor. *And Mephibosheth said to the king, "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home" (v.30).* To be in fellowship with the king was sufficient for Mephibosheth. Therefore, rejecting greed and envy, he offered grace. Ziba definitely did not deserve this kind of favor.

We have to wonder at this point who was telling the truth in the matter about Mephibosheth not going out with the king. A desire to restore the kingdom to himself (as Ziba accused Mephibosheth of doing, 16:3) doesn't measure with the appearance of a man who had been in mourning for several weeks (19:24). Also, the desire to get back the kingdom doesn't fit at all with the grace demonstrated in 19:30. Three times Mephibosheth referred to David as his "lord the king" and to himself as "your slave." And yet it was true that Ziba had provided much-needed assistance. In times of doubt and questions about truth, grace is always a good position to take.

Barzillai Shared Grace With Chimham (vv.31-39).

The king offered grace to a faithful, aged man. Barzillai had proven to be a faithful servant of the king. *Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim, and he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan (v.31).* This is the same older gentlemen had provided much-needed support in David's flight from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 17:27-29). Now again he had traveled about 50 miles to escort David back across the Jordan. What a great display of appreciation and honor he gave. In return David offered him grace, the opportunity to live near himself and receive his care.

The faithful man was too old to accept the king's grace. *Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the*

king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. And the king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem. But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years have I still to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother" (vv.32-37a).

He admitted he was too old to enjoy the pleasures of the king's palace. This would be like offering an octogenarian a lifetime pass to Six Flags over Georgia. What would he do with it?

So the grace offered to Barzillai was given to Chimham. The king offered goodness to him. Barzillai said, *But here is your servant Chimham. Let him go over with my lord the king, and do for him whatever seems good to you."* *And the king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you, and all that you desire of me I will do for you" (vv.37b-38).* It appears David gave an estate near Bethlehem to Chimham (one of Barzillai's relatives or even son) and all the benefits of the king that went with it. Years later the report reads, *"And they went and stayed at Geruth Chimham [lit. "the hospitality accorded Kimham] near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt" (Jer. 41:17).* Barzillai simply passed on the grace he received.

The king returned home and everyone lived happily ever after. *Then all the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. And the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home (v.39).* Finally everything was coming up roses, everything was getting back to normal. All that grace offered and received made quite a difference. Yes, but these are humans. Humans live happily ever after only in heaven.

A Need For Grace Between Relatives (vv.40-43).

There was conflict even in a time of restoration. The king went with the recipient of grace to Gilgal. *The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. (v.40a)*. It is significant that the restored king returned through Gilgal. The town is very important in God's dealings with His people. The name Gilgal means "a wheel or rolling." God named the town this because it was there that He rolled away His people's reproach (Joshua 5:9). Gilgal was where the people of God whom He delivered from Egypt began the conquest of the Promised Land. And so here also God rolled away David's reproach and restored him as king. As Gilgal was the place where the kingdom began under Joshua's leadership (Joshua 4:19), so it was the place where David's kingdom began again.

But, Gilgal also happened to be the place where Saul failed God, the kingdom was ripped away from him, and where the first mention was made of God giving the kingdom to David (1 Samuel 13:12-22). And it was the place where Absalom's failure as king paved the way for David to become king again. Gilgal was almost always known as the place where God poured out His grace on His people. And yet it was also where God's people rejected His grace. Therefore, many years later the prophet Amos chided the sinful Israelites, *"Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days" (Amos 4:4)*. So maybe we should not be surprised to read about conflict that arose even in the context of the rejoicing at the king's restoration.

The words "all" and "half" are a good indication that trouble was brewing. *All the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way (v.40b)*. No doubt these numbers were connected with the representatives (elders) who came from each of the tribes. Only half as many representatives from Israel compared to all the representatives from Judah. Oh. Most of the time when comparison begins, so does trouble.

So then, who had greater claim to the king? Only fierce words could determine that—or so human nature concludes. Too often the fiercest words win human conflicts. *Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why have our brothers the men of*

Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his household over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?" All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is our close relative. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel" (vv.41-43).

The men of Israel accused the men of Judah of stealing away the king (kidnaping) (v.41). Kidnaping was a capital offense, a breach of God's law. The men of Judah did not take this false accusation kindly. This arguing, bickering, and fierce words were an indication of the wickedness that lay just below the surface in the people's hearts. We are not surprised to read in the next chapter that civil war erupted. The dullness of the human heart is too often unaffected by grace.

There is a better way to deal with these things. Grace always wins in God's plan. We will always have a reason to disagree and argue. We can generally find opportunities to demand justice and punish someone. It is easy to let our feelings get hurt and demand that someone owes us something. But God's way is to offer to others undeserved favor. He has poured out abundant, immeasurable, incomprehensible grace on each of us when we confessed our sins. He has forgiven us and welcomes us into fellowship with Himself. He has every right to expect us to respond the same way when the offender comes to us and asks forgiveness. Not to offer undeserved favor is a pretty good indication that we are governed by human wisdom and fleshly weakness which is opposed to God's grace. Recipients of divine grace can share the grace they enjoy.