

2 Samuel 9:1-13 - Identity: Who do you think you are?

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[0 : 00] This morning I tracked over from Bournemouth. We've been in Bournemouth for the last 25 years serving there. Thank you so much for your incredibly warm welcome. It's my first time at a Calvary Chapel.

Personally, so preaching in a Calvary Chapel. Way! Wonderful! So I am right privileged. So thank you so much for that honour and that privilege. Just one or two things by way of introduction. So yes, I was a middle of the road hippie type back in the late 60s, early 70s. I was born on the 1st of May 1953.

For those of you with math skills, that means I'm 72. I know I don't look it. I know I totally do not look 72. But I really am. And actually I'm a cancer survivor. So I had very, very serious cancer back in 2016 through to 19.

I had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that particular time. So I am keen to affirm life. I've been given life again. So I am peddling with the gospel again.

[1 : 11] So just to give you a little bit of a kind of modest background. Brought up on a farm in North London, which will cause you some questions, I'm sure.

It's right just inside the M25 place called Enfield, just between Enfield and Barnet. So it straddles two particular counties, Middlesex and Hertfordshire.

So brought up there in a fairly sort of non-Christian home. My dad would have said he was Anglican. My mother would say that she was Methodist. But they weren't real believers. And I experienced within my own family a total family revival.

So within two years, every single one of us, all five of us came to know the Lord Jesus, beginning with the youngest going upwards.

So my sister first, then my brother, then me, through a fairly circuitous route that I will share briefly with you. Then my mother, I was actually there at the North London Keswick Convention in Oak Hill College, when my mother heard Alan Redpath preach.

[2 : 18] And it was a kind of Christian orientated sermon. And she walked forward in tears to receive Jesus. So, you know, that was kind of fifties for her age wise. And then my dad. So my dad came to know Jesus.

So a total kind of family revival from the bottom upwards, which is interesting. For myself, I was a kind of typical hippie type, kind of counter-cultural type, rebelling against the kind of existing order, the existing authorities, etc., including parental authority, I hasten to add. And cutting a very long story short, when I was at university in Leeds, ostensibly, purposefully studying economics. I didn't do too much economics, actually, but hey.

My brother and sister, back at home in Enfield, I was in Leeds. They came to know Jesus. I thought they were nutty. I thought they were absolutely crackpot. And I probably told them so in reasonably polite terms, maybe.

And I just said to them, what are you doing believing in God in 20th century, sophisticated, scientifically orientated society? And I gave them a bit of a hard time. But the last laugh, you know, is always in heaven.

So heaven always has the last laugh in these kind of situations. So having criticized them, I came home between second and third year at university in Leeds.

[3 : 51] And actually went to a Christian rock musical in a very, very iconic rock venue called the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park in North London, right near my favorite football team, which by the way, don't tell everybody, it's arse.

So if there are any Tottenham people here this morning, I love you to bits. I absolutely love you to bits. If there are any Southampton supporters, I'm praying for the resurrection. So I went very reluctantly, almost, almost against my will actually, to this Rainbow Theatre.

They had a two month run of a Christian rock musical called Lonesome Stone that actually told the story of one particular guy called Lonesome Stone, of course. And he came to know Jesus, how the gospel impacted his particular circle of friends.

And it was very, very, it was incredibly cutting edge, kind of multimedia, visual, spoken, very, very biblical indeed. Came on the back actually of Jesus Christ Superstar, of Godspell.

So what they were aiming to do is to tell the true story of Jesus from the New Testament and to tell it in a live, energetic, applicable fashion. And I can honestly tell you, I mean, it's a long story short here.

[5 : 13] There's a whole back story that I don't have time to say right now. So God, the Holy Spirit, was working way, way back, you know, in terms of Sunday school, learning scripture, etc.

But as a 20 year old hippie who was feeling guilty, hopeless, and all the rest of it, I walked into that, you know, into the Rainbow Theatre there.

I watched this presentation. The Holy Spirit began to get under my skin. And I walked out of that place a clean man for the first time ever. I had not known inner cleanness ever before in my life.

I was just guilt ridden, shame ridden, etc. And I walked out with my head held high because of the grace of God. You know, I was absolutely whammed by the power of the cross.

If I can use that kind of colloquial phrase there. Because I just thought, how can there be a God like that who is so gracious and so merciful and so incredibly kind to me personally?

[6 : 20] So I walked out of there, bought a Bible. I think two days later, I bought a kind of brown leather RSC Bible. Began to devour it totally. Began to witness, etc.

So that's a little bit of my kind of background. So just to finish here, and we'll get into Scripture because that is the most important thing.

In 2011, began to research my kind of revival roots. So I actually do believe that the Jesus people movement I was converted through. So these were people originally from Milwaukee who put this on.

And began to research my kind of spiritual roots and discovered, hey, I hadn't realized before I was actually saved through a revival movement.

1967 to 1974, probably kind of accurate dates. So I began to research that intensively for the last 14 years, actually, which is a long time.

[7 : 19] And then produced this book, When Jesus Met Hippies. And you're actually right. And, you know, without banging my own drum, because I hate pride, but, you know, hopefully, humbly speaking, this is the only book that you can buy about the Jesus people movement in the UK here.

You can buy plenty of books about America. Oh, hello. That was wonderful, wasn't it, Ollie? Yeah. So you can buy many, many books about America.

You can buy some books about Australia. But this is genuinely, uniquely tells a story from a UK perspective. It includes some history in terms of the kind of USA background, but it's unique in that sense.

And you can have copies today. It's usually £13.99. But for £12, you can have a signed copy today. And I've arranged with Simon kindly, just because of saving hassle in terms of cards, etc.

If you want a copy, I would just record your name and then give names to Simon at some point. And pay through the church release. So they are available today.

[8 : 26] And I agree with your prophetic comment earlier. Let's clear the table. Amen. I just felt like yelling. Yes, Lord. Hallelujah. Thank you. So, and also, by the way, it recounts the story of Calvary Chapel.

And it recounts the story of Jim and Sue King in Bradford, bless them, who are still plugging away in Bradford. And their story, they started the first Calvary Chapel in the UK in mid-1980.

They started with a modest Bible study group in their living room that just got pulsatingly full up because people wanted to hear the word. They wanted to encounter Jesus. And they were the first. And my book recounts that as well. Okay. So, if you've got Bibles with you, I'd like to invite you to turn, please. Can we have the first slide, please, Ollie?

That would be great. So, turn with me, please, to 2 Samuel 9. You know, one of the great things I love about Calvary people, they love their Bibles.

[9 : 31] Hopefully, there's an equal emphasis, too, on being filled with the Holy Spirit. So, you know, Paul says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. He also says, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Both hands. So, word and spirit together, just like Chuck Smith taught way, way back when. And all Calvary people believe in, hopefully, I'm sure.

So, 2 Samuel 9. This is a rather unusual passage, actually. And I propose to ask this question, this core question this morning. Who do you think you are from 2 Samuel chapter 9?

And it's about a guy with a very difficult to pronounce name. So, you know, beware, if you're a kind of would-be preacher, or a young preacher, because I used to teach preaching skills at Moreland's College.

Beware, if you come to a passage like this with an unpronounceable name, practice it beforehand. So, this is Mephibosheth. Shall we say that?

[10 : 32] Practice it together, maybe? Mephibosheth. Who is that again? Mephibosheth. There you go. Just giving me practice, really. Chapter 9.

David asked, Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul, to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? Now, there was a servant of Saul's household named Zeba.

They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, Are you Zeba? Your servant, he replied. The king asked, Is there no one still left of the house of Saul, to whom I can show God's kindness?

Zeba answered the king, There's still a son of Jonathan. He's crippled in both feet. Where is he?

The king asked. Zeba answered, He's at the house of Machia, son of Amiel, in Lodabar.

So, King David had him brought from Lodabar, from the house of Machia, son of Amiel. When Mephibosheth, Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor.

[11 : 34] Think about it. By the way, for just a second. If you or I were crippled in both feet, what does it mean to bow down? Think about it. 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. 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 should notice a dead dog like me? Then the king summoned Zeba, 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 Zeba had 15 sons and 20 servants. This was prior to TV being around. Then Zeba said to the king, Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do.

[12 : 47] So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. Mephibosheth had a young son named Micah, and all the members of Zeba's household were servants of Mephibosheth.

And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table and so poignantly here. And he was crippled in both feet.

That's a beautiful story. Beautiful narrative story there. So, I had a motorbike crash in 2011 that prompted me to look at my family history, to get involved with ancestry, to look at my kind of historic roots, which go back to a little place called Little Gadsden in Hertfordshire, back to the kind of 1600s in that particular little quaint little village.

And sometimes things like that prompt us to think about our historic roots. And indeed, when we come to 2 Samuel 9 here, who do you think you are? We find here four generations of the royal household of Israel, beginning with the first king, King Saul.

So, let's just have a quick look at this, because simply put, Saul comes up many, many times throughout this passage, about six occasions, beginning in verse 1.

[14 : 12] Is there anyone still left? of the house of Saul. So, Saul, obviously, very, very key figure in Israeli, sorry, Israelite history, and actually was the first king.

People of God come into the promised land. They want to be like the other pagan nations around them. They plead with God for a king. God relents to their plea and gives them King Saul.

And King Saul turns out to be a fairly paranoid individual in many senses, despite being anointed by God and attempts to do away with the future King David.

So, that's Saul. Then secondly, Saul's son, Jonathan here, who ostensibly should have been his successor, but definitely wasn't for different reasons that we don't have time to go into here. But Jonathan is mentioned many, many times here, not least in verse 1 there. Is there anybody left at the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?

[15:17] So, just to remind you here, Jonathan and David, the future king, had this superglue friendship, this superglue kind of covenanted relationship together.

It was very, very healthy, but they had this wonderful male friendship. Incidentally, if you're a man or a woman, do you have same-gender friendships of deep quality?

I challenge you because that's an amazing, amazing friendship there in the Scriptures. So, Jonathan, this friendship with David, the future king.

Interestingly, and it's really, really important for us to understand 2 Samuel 9 here, back in 1 Samuel 20, Jonathan, who's Saul's son, had recognized that he would not succeed his father, and so the kingdom would go to David.

And there's a very interesting promise in 1 Samuel 20, and Jonathan says to David, the future second king, he says to David, but show me unfailing love, unfailing kindness, sorry, like that of the Lord as long as I live so that I may not be killed and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family.

[16:32] That's something that Jonathan asked David to promise, to pledge such allegiance, such mercy to the royal family that that would happen.

And that's a very, very important background. That's 1 Samuel 20, verses 14 to 17. Saul, Jonathan, Mephibosheth with the unpronounceable name. So, this is the guy that features particularly in this chapter here in 2 Samuel 9.

We do know from 2 Samuel 4.4, let me just read it quickly and briefly to us just to get a good background here, and then we'll talk about the whole theme of identity from this chapter.

So, back in 2 Samuel 4.4, the author here, Samuel says, Jonathan, son of Saul, had a son who was lame in both feet.

He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. That's their death on Mount Gilboa against the Philistines. They were slaughtered by the Philistines there.

[17:35] He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.

So, that gives us a little bit of historical background as to what was going on in the background here. And obviously, you know, this guy lived a pretty tragic life from the age of...

Just imagine, I mean, this is probably first year primary school. Can you imagine that kind of thing happening to you or to me?

It just beggars belief, really, and just living with that for the rest of your life, including those formative years, you know, growing up, teenage years, et cetera.

Can you imagine the kind of reaction to you of people around you? So, Mephibosheth. But fortunately, happily he married. We have no explicit mention in Scripture of Mephibosheth's marriage or his wife, but we do know from verse 12 there, Mephibosheth had a young son named Micah and all the members of Zeba's household were servants of Mephibosheth.

[18:47] We have no other details about his wife. We do have the name of their son. That's it. So, I just want you to see there that there's a strong sense of family history within this particular passage.

So, who do you think you are? So, if you'd asked me that back in 1973, I probably would have said, I'm a counterculture person. And probably more popularly, I might just have said to you, I'm part of the sex, drugs, and rock and roll culture.

That was pretty core to my particular identity. I'm not saying that's good. I'm just describing to you what I would have said had you said to me, who are you, Andrew?

I probably would have said, I'm part of that generation. That was kind of core to my particular identity. So, how would Mephibosheth actually answer that important question?

Let's look at five possibilities. Next slide. Thank you. So, first one is, Mephibosheth was appointed, I think, first of all, to his good pedigree.

[19:53] So, verse one again, David asks, is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? This guy had raw blood in his veins.

He really, really did. He was from an outstandingly good background. And he had a good pedigree. The grandson of the first king of Israel, despite the fact that he hadn't entered into the kind of practical inheritance of that for himself tangibly, materially, practically.

He hadn't seen a dicky bird of his inheritance, really. He was living as a pauper at this particular juncture here. But he had raw blood running through his veins.

He was at the house of Saul, which creates his own sense of incredible dignity. You know, in today's generation, he would have been in Hutu. In today's generation, if you've ever heard of the Bratz, which is a kind of list of, you know, kind of aristocratic people, he would have been pretty much top of the tree there.

So he was incredibly well-rooted in terms of his good pedigree. Now, I don't always quote Danny Dyer in my particular sermons, but I will do as a kind of exception for the good folks of Calvary Chapel this morning.

[21 : 21] So Danny Dyer went on Who Do You Think You Are? on TV and discovered, surprise, surprise, crafty cockney bloke, you know, with pretty dubious morals, I think, probably.

He discovered he's directly descended from King Edward III. I mean, for goodness sake, what is going on there? You know, ancestry can lead you into some very interesting roots and, you know, all the rest of it.

So he was directly related to, and boy, did he make some noise about it as well. Typical Danny Dyer, I think. So that on one hand, another of the participants here, Alex Kingston, the female actor who appeared in Doctor Who, found out that, conversely, one of her ancestors ran a brothel.

You can't win, guys. You know, you're either descended from a famous king or your descendant ran a brothel. I mean, who knows? So, our roots are really important.

Some people find distinctly their roots are very core to their identity. And sometimes, it's kind of high-level roots, and sometimes, it's low-level roots as well.

[22 : 39] These things can get into us and define our identity. Secondly, physical appearance, which, of course, is very, very popular in terms of today's society, I would suggest to you, as you well know.

So, verse 3 again, just says about Mephibosheth here, he's almost defined here by Ziba. He's defined here, yep, as being crippled in both feet, which is a pretty horrible way to be defined, a pretty sad way to define oneself.

I mean, it is telling the truth, obviously, so this is factually true. But do we have to define ourselves by any sense of physical impairment or physical challenge or even mental health challenges, etc.? So, he was crippled in both feet. And moreover, in verse 4 there, he is dependent on carers, which many people in our society today, of course, are.

So, verse 4, the king asks, where is he? The king asks, Ziba answered, he's at the house of Machia, son of Amiel, in Lodabar. So, he's living in a kind of being cared for relationship, which, of course, many people are in our society today as well.

[24 : 02] I just got to thinking, you know, what goes on in somebody's psychology? If you've been injured in that way, inadvertently injured in that particular fashion, at the age of 5, what on earth goes through somebody's mind and heart through those following years?

I would suggest to you that he might not have just been defined by his distorted appearance, sadly. He might have been identified to by his twisted attitude, maybe.

Who knows? We're not told. If I was in his shoes, I might feel a sense of understandable anger toward God for allowing me to drop from my nerves.

And I might also, just being really, really honest here, and I might also have had a kind of interesting attitude toward my nerves. I could have been very, very resentful historically toward my nerves way, way back, way, way back through the years.

Because appearance is such a big deal in society today. And sometimes, you know, how many of you know that we get influenced by society's values?

[25 : 14] Please don't pretend that we as Christians are immune from society's values because we jolly will not, me included. We are shaped by society's values.

And sometimes we need to be thoroughly prophetic and stick our necks out to say, what does Scripture say about people's identity? and to sing it loud and clear and to communicate it really, really well.

So, physical appearance and so on. I mean, in today's society, what do you and I associate with L'Oreal? You know it well because you've heard the adverts because I'm worth it.

Have you ever heard, have you ever seen a quote-unquote non-good-looking person on a L'Oreal advert? You haven't. Of course you haven't.

Why? Because it's exalting physical appearance. Our society is infected with this. But this guy experienced the grace of God and the kindness of God in his struggles with his physical appearance.

[26 : 19] And therefore, I would kind of applaud people who run the Paralympics. I'd applaud, even applaud Prince Harry, dare I even say, for the Invictus games.

You know, because these people are saying we're not defined fundamentally by our physical appearance. So I think in that sense we can applaud them. Thirdly, material wealth.

Verse 7 here. Don't be afraid, David said to him, for I'll surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you, listen to this, it's amazing, I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul and you'll always eat at my table.

Just imagine again, this guy is being cared for by this particular bloke, Machia. Sorry, sorry, Ziba.

So, interesting here, material wealth. He was to inherit all the land belonging, all the royal land, but he hadn't done it at all at this particular point.

[27 : 25] And then there was the turning the tables. God actually sometimes, doesn't he, God sometimes comes to us in our struggles and he turns the tables.

One of the things, incidentally, we pray for certain family situations is, restore our fortunes like streams in the Negev. If you know your Bible at all well, you will know for sure it's a very strange thing to say that because the Negev is desert.

How many streams of water have you seen in the desert recently? But that's the kind of thing we pray for certain situations, for divine turnaround within our family situation.

We've had family fire last year in our older son's home. Thankfully, when they were not in there, that caused them infinite trouble, stress, etc. For months and months and months, they were out of their house for nine months while it was renovated again.

Believe me, we have been through the mill sometimes. But we don't let it totally define us. We face it realistically. So, back to this situation here, material wealth here.

[28 : 39] So, he had this benefactor called Makhir who looked after his medical financial affairs probably. And then he was given this amazing person, Zeba, and his 15 sons and 27 boys, that's a fairly sizable company.

So, it was delegated by King David to look after Mephibosheth and all his lands because, you know, without being indelicate here, how can somebody crippled in both feet actually supervise that physically?

It's not particularly easy come possible. So, God provided them in his difficulty there. So, material wealth.

And again, 21st century society, I actually looked up the Times Rich List and good old Sir James Dyson famous for the Hoovers, he's the second on the Times Rich List.

He's worth 23 billion pounds. I can't even imagine what 23 billion looks like but that's him, second person behind, I think, an Indian couple somewhere or other.

[29 : 52] So, there are people who do pride themselves on their affluence but, by the way, and I've found some Christians too can get this particular one. I have found, through my years of pastoral experience back to 1985, I found also that there are some people, including Christians, who define themselves by their poverty.

They just love the fact they're consistently hard up. Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not here to preach prosperity doctrine at all because I don't like it, frankly.

But, nonetheless, there's nothing inherently good about prosperity, neither is there anything inherently good about poverty because we believe in a God who provides for our needs according to his riches and glory in Jesus Christ, don't we?

There is no great virtue in being, I'm really, really hard up. You know, because sometimes people you meet say incessantly, they say, we're short of a bob or two, you know, and they just keep saying it and saying it and saying it.

You just kind of think, what's going on there? You're actually defining yourself as poverty or as prosperity. They're two equally opposite temptations.

[31 : 09] So, fourthly, self-image. you've kind of seen the resonances here, hopefully within this particular narrative here. So, self-image, bit of a strange one, I think.

Look at verse eight with me briefly. So, there's this encounter between David and Mephibosheth, and Mephibosheth bows down in verse eight and says, what is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me?

Oh, my goodness me. Isn't that a very, very interesting phrase there? A dead dog. If you look through the Old Testament scriptures, you'll find the basic guts of this phrase is, they're not worth a second look.

Dead dogs, you don't bother to give dead dogs a second look. Eat your heart out, RSPCA. But you don't, generally. so, what Mephibosheth is saying here, as I understand it, without reading 21st century psychology into the Bible, he is saying, I'm like a dead dog.

That's why I'm not worth a second look. I'd suggest to you that actually self-image is a pretty contemporary issue, and it's one to navigate for us as Christians, to actually seek to get right, to get biblically orientated about.

[32 : 30] So, not worth a second look. And again, in terms of Christian believers that I interact with over many, many years, I have found some who have an extremely high self-image.

You know, they even believe their own PR. They're so confident, they're so cocky, they're so proud, they're so arrogant, you know, that they will tell you their CV and tell you their CV again and again and again.

They will pump out PR about themselves because I met them, not just prominent people, I've been, you know, anyway, I was standing in church one particular morning in God First in Christ Church, which is our home church, and I met this guy for the first time, and he said, what do you do?

And I said, well, currently I'm authoring. And so he proceeded to say immediately, I said, it's my second book, book, you know, just because he asked me, and he said to me, I kid you not, he said, well, I've written 37 books.

Now, do you think that's good Christian stuff? I think it's particularly encouraging, is it? You know, when somebody's gone through all the effort to write a book there, and then this guy turns up, rocks up to church, you engage him in pleasant, welcome, conversation, et cetera, and he pronounces, I'm an author of 37, he told me lots of other stuff as well.

[34 : 00] I got a full-blown CV in five minutes flat. Now I'll ask you, I mean, yeah, I felt interesting things going on in here, like I kind of wanted to gently kick him in a very Christian way.

Only gently, mind. So, self-image. But I've also met Christians who have an extremely low view of themselves and are crippled by not a proper sense of being created in the image and likeness of the living God and being redeemed through the blood of Christ, and they cannot even lift their heads knowing that.

And my plea to you, if you're one of those, is God is the lifter of your head. if you're struggling with that kind of nonsense, I suggest you it's not right to identify yourself in that particular way.

It's not right to be overly proud either, but to have a healthy self-image here is a really, really good thing. And then finally, a wonderful family.

So, Mephibosheth here could have defined himself through his family. Verse 12, Mephibosheth had a young son named Micah, and all the members of Zeba's household were servants of Mephibosheth, because sometimes people like him, like us, on occasions, tend to define ourselves through our family.

[35 : 30] And sometimes actually parents with the best motivations in the world seek to live their lives sometimes on occasions by proxy through their children. And again, it's a very, very dodgy terrain.

There's nothing wrong with me saying to you, I'm proud of my two sons, Philip who's 42, Thomas who's 39, their wives, grandkids, etc. You know, I'm grateful to God for them.

But do I live my life through them? I seek not to, actually. I want to give a good legacy, I want to give a good inheritance to them, but I don't live my life through them.

Just to give you one slightly humorous illustration here. We regularly get Christmas newsletters from our Christian friends and we went through a patch once where I can't tell you, this is slightly exaggerated for the sense of humor here, I can't tell you how many of our friends put in their Christmas newsletters that their kids got 17 stars and nothing wrong whatsoever.

I mean, they were star pupils. Every single one of them were jolly star pupils. I mean, what's that all about? And besides which, within Christian circles, what does that say to Christian kids from Christian families who struggle academically although they're much more practical than they are intellectual?

[37 : 00] I mean, let the plea arise for them. Please. We need to give dignity. Give dignity. to those in that particular situation as well.

Yes, applaud. Yes, encourage. But let's give dignity to those who really wrestle and who really struggle. Now, let me just before, well, never believe a preacher when they say in conclusion. Let me just pull some threads together here. One really, really crucial thread to draw together. these five issues are very interesting ones.

Number one, they're biblical. Number two, they're contemporary. And number three, you can see if you look carefully at them and think carefully about them, how dodgy they are potentially.

Let me just illustrate quickly here. So think again about Mephibosheth here in terms of his health. One minute from naught to five is full of health and mobility.

[38 : 06] He's a toddler. He's crawling all over the place, getting into cupboards, et cetera, et cetera. He's full of energy. The next minute he's crippled in both feet. Instantaneously happens.

Negatively. Positively, one minute he's living on handouts and the next minute he's a multimillionaire in an instant. moment.

Because you see, I'd like to suggest to us pastorally here this morning, sometimes it takes a crisis like my cancer, for example, other things in our lives.

Sometimes it takes a crisis to bring us up short and to say, how about you? How do you define yourself? Because if you define yourself in any other way than God in Christ, I'd suggest you, and I'm very shaky ground, whether it's negative or positive.

Because that's what comes out of the story of good old Mephibosheth. And sometimes it's a crisis for us to look afresh at our foundations.

[39 : 15] So, quickly here, much more quickly, thank you, final, final slide. Incidentally, I was pastoring in Godman Sistering in Cambridgeshire, just near Huntingdon, and my youth group at that time used to count up the number of finalists I did in my preaching.

And I began to twig that, and then I changed tack and began to use in conclusion. Anyway, I will not inflict that upon you this morning.

You've been incredibly patient. Let's be positive here. Quickly, who do you think you are in God? because for me, when I came to know Jesus, all the rage at the time was calling these people like me, first of all, street Christians, but eventually we became, in the public square, we became either Jesus people or Jesus freaks.

I'm here to tell you, as a former countercultural person, I stand before you today, I'm proud to be counted a Jesus person. I'm proud to be counted a Jesus freak, thank you very much.

I have no qualms about it whatsoever. I love it because it's a statement of my identity and more of it's a statement from somebody else saying about me, he's a Jesus person, he's a Jesus freak.

[40 : 40] So, three things quickly here. Who do you think you are in God? Actually, wrong, sorry, back, back please, thank you.

So, three things quickly. Just to hammer home the felt, just keep this thought in your mind here, from this particular passage, who are you in God, in Christ?

Number one, his kindness to you. Three times the kindness of God is mentioned in this particular chapter and intriguingly, on two of those occasions, it's human kindness, but if you look very, very carefully, don't have time to say too much about this, but if you look in verse three, one of those three occasions is this, the king asked, is there no one still left at the house of Saul to whom I can show what?

God's kindness. God's kindness. I'd suggest to you that's remarkable. What that says is for me, as a frail, fallible, human being this morning, that I can be a means of showing God's kindness to others.

So if God doesn't always show his kindness directly, sometimes he uses people like you and me. So lift your head, lift your head, because you can be a means of God's incredible, incredible kindness.

[42 : 11] kindness. And here, this measure that King David took reflected the very kindness of God himself. And one aspect of that, of course, is David searching out Mephibosheth.

He actually sought him out. He went after him because, you know, grace and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. Grace and mercy are pursuing us. Isn't that good?

Well, look a bit more happy about it. Is it good? Grace and mercy are following us. They're running hard after us to apprehend us and to say, this is grace and mercy.

Why do you have some of it? In Christ, his kindness to us. It's remarkable. In the New Testament, of course, his kindness comes through creation.

Acts 14, verse 17. It also comes through his saving grace. Titus chapter 4, verse, chapter 3, verse 4, says, but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we done, but because of his mercy.

[43 : 20] That is the story of my life. That's the story of your life as well. The kindness of God brought you to him in the first place. He chased hard after you.

He brought you to himself. He called you by name because he calls his sheep by name, gloriously, wonderfully. And he's flooded your life with his kindness in Christ.

Secondly, his elevation of you. As I said earlier, just imagine that potential indignity of almost being obliged to find some physical way of bowing down before the king, which is rightful, of course, but Mephibosheth had his own issues in terms of physical condition.

but his elevation of you because again three times in this chapter, in verses 7, 10, and 13, the writer says very, very clearly, for example, in verse 7 there, don't be afraid, David said to him, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather and what?

You will always eat at my table. And it has two more repetitions of that. How many of you know that the Bible is not full of repetition for padding? Yeah?

[44 : 39] We must get away from this silly, silly thing that sometimes we think, you know, preachers pad things, well, sometimes they do. But nonetheless, scripture itself is not full of needless padding, but it's there because sometimes we need a little reminder, actually, honestly.

It's said three times, you're always eating at the king's table, always eating at the king's table, always eating at the king's table. Why? Because we're slow to learn. Sometimes we forget.

It's a good job sometimes the Bible repeats itself. Honestly, isn't it? Would you agree? He's elevation of you. Because Mephibosheth here, with all his troubles, with all his difficulties, he's treated like one of the king's very own sons.

I wish I could preach a whole sermon. Perhaps Simon will do me the honor of asking me back to preach on adoption. The whole theology of adoption in the New Testament, Ephesians 1, you know, we've been made sons, we've been adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ himself. Ephesians 1, it's glorious. We're treated like the king's sons and daughters. We are elevated. So what are you doing looking at the ground all the time? What are you doing?

[45 : 55] I don't mean arrogance, but I do mean, what are you doing looking at the ground the whole time? You've been elevated by grace. We have that scripture from John 1, didn't we, earlier?

You've been made a child of God. It's all God's doing and it's absolutely wonderful. His elevation of you. Paul says in Ephesians 2 that even though we deserve the wrath of God, even though we're objects of God's wrath, but God in his mercy raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places.

If that's not eating at the king's table, I don't know what is, frankly. Do you? That is eating at the king's table forever more. You'll never be budged from that.

That's one position you'll never be budged from by the grace of God. His elevation of you. And notice please, it's true even when you don't feel totally whole today.

Yeah? This is a vital, vital, vital grace truth. You may be sitting there this morning thinking, but I'm still not there yet.

[47 : 10] Welcome to my world. Welcome to my world. I have plenty of failing still. I am still in some ways hampered and hindered.

My mobility spiritually, morally, sometimes is challenged. But I can tell you, I go to communion these days with fresh eyes and fresh ears and fresh heart.

Because we're called to sit at the king's table forevermore. Because he elevates us. even if we still feel today, Lord, I still lack wholeness today.

That's why I come to the table. To be reminded of my wholeness in Jesus Christ. And then thirdly and finally, because my time has more than run out. So apologies.

But I don't apologize for preaching. Hey. Is this helping, guys? Good. Excellent. Thank you. So as kindness towards you, as that elevation of you, and I promise I will finish on this particular one, his provision for you.

[48 : 15] Somebody is still lame in both feet, even despite the blessings of his restored lands, and the instruction is given to Zeba and his company here to actually tend these lands on behalf of Mephibosheth, to provide for him, to provide for this guy for the rest of his life.

It's an all overarching, comprehensive provision for the rest of his life. I have a paternal grandfather who was the original farmer in our farming family.

He was the bailiff in Ealing in Middlesex of Lord and Lady Rosslyn. He was their bailiff, which basically meant Lord and Lady Rosslyn did not get their overalls on and their muddy boots on and go and serve their estate.

She said to my grandfather, grandfather, you do it on our behalf. So this guy, Ziba, is very much a kind of my paternal grandfather, grandfather figure.

And it's promised here that this provision carries on for the rest of his life. and it says explicitly in verse 10 there, you and your son and your servants are to farm the land for him, bring in the crops so that your master's grandson may be provided for.

[49 : 36] I suggest to you this morning, if we take these truths on board, if we allow the Holy Spirit to seal them in our hearts and minds and beings, it will do us the world of good.

And moreover, I think it will teach us ways and means of communicating to people in 21st century Britain today, which we have a real passion to see revival in.

I do, and you do too. It's a way of locking into a current issue that is so, so live, not just in terms of gender identity, but much more broadly, people are wanting to discuss, they're wanting to understand what makes me tick, who am I fundamentally, and I think we've got a real entry point there for the gospel just to say, let me just share with you my particular story, how I don't identify myself merely by factual human stuff, but I identify myself as, yes, call me a Jesus freak, fine, let me tell you now about Jesus, amen.

Thank you for listening. So I'll just pray briefly. Sorry, it's been a little too long, Simon, but hey. can I just suggest just literally just literally as