

Lines of Kindness – David and Mephibosheth

Introduction

Earlier lessons in this study described crossing lines. This lesson describes lines of kindness between David and Mephibosheth. Consider definitions of “line” and “kindness” from Webster’s 1828 Dictionary.

LINE, n. 1. In geometry, a quantity extended in length, without breadth or thickness; (Note - In geometry a line extends in both directions without end (infinitely).

KINDNESS, n. [from kind, the adjective.] 1. Good will; benevolence; that temper or disposition which delights in contributing to the happiness of others, which is exercised cheerfully in

- gratifying their wishes,
- supplying their wants or
- alleviating their distresses;

... Kindness ever accompanies love.

Background

The Lord gave David and Jonathan, Saul’s son, a great love for each other. According to Ussher’s dates, about twenty years before Mephibosheth was born, Jonathan and David made a covenant. *I Samuel 18:3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.*

About a year later, they renewed the covenant. *I Samuel 20:42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever...*

When Saul and Jonathan were killed and the news came to Jonathan’s family, Mephibosheth and his family made haste to flee, and Mephibosheth was made lame. *II Samuel 4:4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.*

David’s Kindness to Mephibosheth

When Mephibosheth was about thirteen years old, King David remembered Jonathan. *II Samuel 9:1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?*

David further defines the kindness speaking to Ziba, a man that had been a servant to Saul. *II Samuel 9:3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.*

David described the lines of kindness between him and Mephibosheth as “the Kindness of God”. Three acts of kindness by David to Mephibosheth followed. David spared his life three times.

The First Time – Because of a covenant made before Mephibosheth was born, David spared his life. It was often the practice to kill all the children of a deposed king, but David told Mephibosheth that he was to be shown kindness for Jonathan’s sake. *II Samuel 9:6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! 7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?* He also restored Saul’s land to Mephibosheth, directed Ziba to be a servant to Mephibosheth to till the land for him and gave Mephibosheth a place at David’s table.

Lines of Kindness – David and Mephibosheth

The Second Time - About twelve years later, when Mephibosheth was about twenty-five years old, Ziba met David and accused Mephibosheth of treason. *II Samuel 16:3 And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.* David gave all of Mephibosheth's possessions to Ziba. *II Samuel 16:4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.*

Mephibosheth was in distress when David returned to the palace, but David again spared his life. *II Samuel 19:24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.* 25 *And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?* 26 *And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.* 27 *And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.* 28 *For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table.* What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king? 29 *And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.* 30 *And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.*

The Third Time - About two years later, David inquired of the Lord the cause of the famine in the land. The Lord answered that it was because Saul, in his zeal, slew the Gibeonites to which Israel had sworn allegiance. David asked the Gibeonites what he could do to make atonement. The Gibeonites said they did not want Saul's silver, gold or house, and they said we will not kill any man of Israel. They said let seven men of Saul's sons be delivered unto us which we will kill. Mephibosheth was again spared. *II Samuel 21:7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.* 8 *But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth (Jonathan's brother); and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:*

God's View of the Eternal Plan of Salvation

By David's kindness of the Lord, Mephibosheth was spared three times. Let us look at God's "Eternal Plan of Salvation" and three times that the kindness of the Lord is shown toward us.

First - David promised kindness to Mephibosheth before he was born, and he showed that kindness when he invited him to his table. God showed His kindness to us before we were created by creating the plan of salvation for us. *Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:* (Counsel from the original language means purpose, the 7th definition in Webster's 1828). *Revelations 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

In addition, part of that plan was to provide an opportunity for Adam and Eve to repent. He could have determined that as soon as they sinned, they would be cast into heaven. We could describe part of the plan as time and invitation. David invited Mephibosheth to eat at his table, and God invites everyone to His table. *Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Second - David showed kindness to Mephibosheth when he was in great distress because he was accused of treason. God showed his kindness to us when we were guilty and in distress and He saved us.

Lines of Kindness – David and Mephibosheth

Psalms 116:1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

Psalms 116:2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

Psalms 116:3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

Third - David showed kindness to Mephibosheth when the question of his life came up later. God showed his kindness to us after we were saved by keeping His (our) salvation.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Man's view of Our Travel from Nature to Grace

Looking at Noah Webster's definition of kindness reveals a picture of our "Travel from Nature to Grace" in deficiency, desire and distress.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary of the definitions wishes, wants and distress are summarized as follows:

- gratifying their wishes (To have a desire, or strong desire,)
- supplying their wants (Deficiency; defect; the absence of that which is necessary or useful;) or
- alleviating their distresses (Extreme pain; anguish of body or mind);

Of course, any of the three acts are kindness as described by Webster. Since the order for the definition is not important to the definition, let us consider the kindness of God as addressing:

- Deficiency; defect; the absence of that which is necessary or useful
- Desire, or strong desire
- Distress - Extreme pain; anguish of body or mind

Deficiency - Through God's kindness, we are made aware of our deficiency.

Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Desire, or strong desire – He creates in us by His Spirit a strong desire for His salvation.

Solomon 3:1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Solomon 3:2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Distress - Extreme pain; anguish of body or mind – Consider Paul's condition on the way to Damascus, as he fell to the ground.

Acts 22:6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

Acts 22:7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

Acts 22:9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Lines of Kindness – David and Mephibosheth

Acts 22:11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

Noah Webster

How is it that a man that begin work in 1900 and published a Dictionary 1828 show us such a picture in a simple definition of a word. Noah Webster, a Revolutionary War soldier, wrote a letter to Thomas Dawes December 20, 1808. In the letter, he described that he went to church as a child and that early in his adult life he read a book that persuaded him to live a virtuous life. However, later he did not want his wife and daughters to go the revivals of the second great Awakening, and he stressed to them the importance of a “rational religion”. They went, and he struggled with what to do. The letter continues:

“During this time, my mind continued to be more and more agitated, and in a manner wholly unusual and to me unaccountable. I had indeed short composure, but at all times of the day and in the midst of other occupations, I was suddenly seized with impressions, which called my mind irresistibly to religious concerns and to the awakening. These impressions induced a degree of remorse for my conduct, not of that distressing kind which often attends convictions, but something which appeared to be reproof.

These impressions I attempted to remove by reasoning with myself, and endeavoring to quiet my mind, by a persuasion, that my opposition to my family, and the awakening was not a real opposition to a rational religion, but to enthusiasm or false religion. I continued some weeks in this situation, utterly unable to quiet my own mind, and without resorting to the only source of peace and consolation. **The impressions however grew stronger till at length I could not pursue my studies without frequent interruptions. My mind was suddenly arrested, without any previous circumstance of the time to draw it to this subject and as it were fastened to the awakening and upon my own conduct. I closed my books, yielded to the influence, which could not be resisted or mistaken and was led by a spontaneous impulse to repentance, prayer and entire submission and surrender of myself to my maker and redeemer. My submission appeared to be cheerful and was soon followed by that peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away....**

In the month of April last I made a profession of faith; in this most solemn and affecting of all transactions of my life, I was accompanied with my two eldest daughters; while I felt a degree of compunction that I had not sooner dedicated myself to God, it was with heartfelt delight, I could present myself before my Maker, and say 'Here am I, with the children which thou hast given me.'”

Summary

The definition of a line is an infinite line, meaning without beginning and without end. *Psalms 41:13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*

Webster’s final statement in the definition of kindness was “kindness ever accompanies love”. God is the source of love. *I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

The lines of kindness to our salvation began with God and travels to us by His love. *Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,*

Psalms 117:1 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. 2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.