

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Thirty-Eighth Week - Sunday

MEPHIBOSHETH

"Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, 'Mephibosheth?' And he answered, 'Here is your servant!' So David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually.' Then he bowed himself, and said, 'What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?'" (2 Samuel 9:6-8).

According to Jewish notions and phraseology, calling oneself a "dead dog" is the strongest expression of humility and unworthiness--nay, of vileness!--that could be devised or that the language could express. But who is it here that uses this expression? It is one who by his birth was a prince; one of whom we know nothing but what is good; one whose sentiments, whenever they appear, are just, generous, and pious; and one whose private character appears to have been blameless. Had Mephibosheth abused himself far more than he needed and confessed himself to be that which he really was not?

Now a man has no more right to lie about himself to his own disparagement than to lie about himself to his own praise. Yet the world reckons the latter to be simply ignominious and contemptible while the former is reckoned insincere and not to be believed.

Mephibosheth calls himself a "dead dog," and Asaph refers to himself as "a beast," calling himself foolish and ignorant (Ps. 73:22), and Paul declares himself "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:13). But yet we know that Mephibosheth was a worthy man, and that there were far more foolish men than Asaph and far greater sinners than Paul. Did they lie? By no means.

The man of a tender and enlightened conscience knows that in God's sight the very heavens are not clean, and that God charges even his angels with folly. The more he advances in spiritual life, the more clear is his perception of the holiness of God, and the more distinctly does he feel how abhorrent are his sinful thoughts, words, and actions. A man does not know the heart of others, and he does not judge them. But he does know something of the evil of his own heart. A man is to be judged according to his light, according to what he has and not according to what he does not have. And judging by that measure, considering how much has been given to

him, he knows that so much as an evil thought involves him in greater sin than belongs to the grosser offenses of less instructed men.

Such a man reasons that if he, with eyes blinded by self-love, is able to see so much of the plague of his own heart, what must be the sight presented to the view of the pure and holy God, who sees far more defilement in the best of our duties than we ever see in the worst of our sins. What man of awakened conscience, when he considers how ungrateful, how wayward, how rebellious his heart has often been, and how the remaining depravities of his nature have defiled his most holy undertakings, cannot help but cry out, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?"

Ah, it is well for him that he is not required to answer. Through the cloud of sin and grief he hears that Voice which is life to him: "Son of man, be not afraid." Jesus has taken the burden not only of our cares but of our sins.