

# Lame Feet

by James H. McConkey

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*"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? . . . And Ziba said unto the King, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet" (2 Sam. 9:1, 3).*

The Old Testament contains some of the most beautiful pictures of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we find anywhere, and in the lovely story in the ninth chapter of Second Samuel we have a wonderful picture of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

King David was coming into his kingdom. You remember he had a pitiless foe in Saul, yet, as he comes now to the kingdom, he asks if there are not any descendants of Saul,—not to put them to death as most heathen kings would have done, but in order that he might show the kingdom of God to him. So they bring in a young man named Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and therefore the grandson of Saul. David places him in his kingdom at his table, covers his lame feet with these tokens of his grace and tells him that from now on he is to share the beauty of the King throughout his life. It is a story, dear friends, that is full of beautiful lessons for us. The first one I draw is

that—

### Every Christian Knows About Lame Feet

A very distinguished preacher, somewhat after the modern order, said a couple of years ago that Jesus Christ came to reveal the hidden splendors in the human soul, and I turned, as he told of it, to the 5th chapter of Galatians to notice God's picture of the hidden splendors in the human soul and here it is: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness; Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies; Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." If that is the soul of hidden splendors that Jesus Christ came to reveal, it would be an unfortunate day for you and me. Every honest man and woman knows as they get a vision of their own natural heart, that theirs is not a heart filled with hidden splendors that Jesus Christ has come to reveal. If our innermost hearts were thrown on a screen just now, and all that is in them revealed, I wonder if we honestly think the picture would be a picture of hidden splendor? "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" and any earnest soul knows that the only hidden splendor in our natural human hearts is that of Col 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is in the new life that

comes in to us when we believe on Jesus Christ, that is the splendid life, spiritually speaking, and it is only on the stock of the new life of Christ in us that Jesus Christ can hear the fruitage that we can call splendid from God's viewpoint.

**The King showed kindness to Mephibosheth  
*for the sake of another.***

"Is there anyone here of the House of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" said King David as he came to his kingdom.

I remember a very fine college story. It runs like this. A college class had come back many, many years afterward, for one of their late reunions. As they sat down to supper, the boys began to identify one another. One by one they ran down each man and revealed his identity, all but one man, a grey, grizzled veteran, who sat with a smile on his face at their vain attempts to identify him. Finally he said: "Wait a moment until I bring out my boy." He went out; presently the door opened and he came in. He brought in a fine, handsome, upstanding boy, as like himself in the days of his college days as two peas. The boys all threw up their hands and with one voice shouted: "It is old Bill." He was so perfect a replica of his father in the days when he was in college that they instantly recognized him; they threw their arms around him, hugged him, feted him and feasted him for the sake of another.

So it was with King David. He saw more than the crippled boy that morning of the dim background. He saw the face of one that he loved, the face of a young man of whom the Book said that his love for David was passing the love of woman, the face of one who had saved David from many a murderous attack upon his life by his own father, the face of one whose soul clove to the soul of David, the face of one who had laid down his life on Gilboah for an unworthy father. As David saw Jonathan's face in that background, his heart went out in a great rush of tenderness and loving ministry to the crippled boy for the sake of another.

Do you ever wonder how God can love us as He does? We look at our own weakness, our frailties or indifference, our coldness and our failures, and we wonder how God can possibly love us as the Book pictures. Here is the secret. Back of us is the most awful background the world ever saw,—the picture of the Son of God hanging upon that murderous tree. This is the picture God sees in the background. He hears the hiss of the scourge; He hears the jeers and the mockery; He hears the cry: "He saved others, himself he cannot save." He hears the sobs of weeping women and the cries of little children. He hears the voice at last crying out: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" And God looks beyond us poor, stumbling, broken, faltering children and sees that face of all faces in the background. See where the Book says: "Be ye tender hearted, forgiving

one another even as God for Christ's sake forgave us." That is how God loves us, and that is why God loves us,—for the sake of another who loved us and gave Himself for us.

***The King said nothing about Mephibosheth's  
Lame Feet—He covered them.***

He covered them with the table of his grace as Mephibosheth sat and hid his feet under that table. You remember that beautiful verse in Hebrews 10:17—"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Suppose some man has injured you, done you a grievous wrong. You say about it: "Well, I will forgive that wrong, but I never can forget it" Maybe it disturbs you. You are a child of God, you want to be right with God and perhaps it troubles you that though you have honestly forgiven, you feel you cannot forget. Think of this a moment. Forgiveness is purely an act of volition,—your own volition; you can and are expected by God to forgive, but forgetfulness is not under the control of your will. There is a marvelous law by which these plastic tablets of the brain will take an impression and you cannot banish it at will, and the child of God who honestly forgives, even though he cannot forget, is right with God. But, praise be to God, there is something God can do that you and I cannot. God can forgive and God has forgotten all those sins of our old past life. "Thou hast forgotten, O Lord" said a Godly middleaged saint: "Thou hast forgotten all the sins I

remember and thou dost remember all the good deeds I have forgotten." That is the beautiful grace of God.

Some Christians seem to think that they will meet their old unregenerated life when all those records of transgressions and sins are opened there at the judgment seat. How do you reconcile that with "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more?"

No, when God brings a man or woman to Christ Jesus, there is a new creation and God gives such a man or woman as brand-new a start as though he had never committed a sin. Do you believe that? Anything short of that dishonors the work of the blood of Jesus Christ. God gave the babe in Christ who comes to Christ as clean a sheet as a blank sheet of paper, gives him a brand-new start, with the memory of all the old sins of the old life blotted out. GOD COVERS,—that is what the word "atone" means,—covers our sinful past by the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is a solemn thing in these days to think of how men are seeking to banish that truth from the Word of God. You remember that marvelous text in Revelation concerning John's vision: "And I beheld and lo in the midst of the throne a lamb stood as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6) "slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:18)—an atoning lamb for the infirmities of the past—an atoning Christ who is kept for 2000 years in this Book that says He came as the lamb of God,—an atoning Christ in the midst of the throne of God in all the eternity



that is to come. That is the picture of God's extent of covering of our sins, by Jesus Christ, the slain lamb of God. God will keep atonement before the eyes of the assembled universe through all the ages of eternity. He does not say anything about our lame feet,—all that old past life,—them He has covered with the blood of Jesus Christ.

I wonder if we think enough of what it cost to cover our lame feet. I stood one day at Niagara and I thought of that text in Isa. 53:6, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Then I remembered the marginal translation: "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all." I remembered the geologist said there was a cubic mile of water a day flowing over those two falls before which I was standing, and I thought of the untold millions of tons of water that were meeting at that precipice. I thought of Lake Erie with 200 feet of depth; of Lake Huron, with its 500 feet of depth; of Lake Michigan, with its 600 feet of depth; of Lake Superior, with its 1000 feet of depth and 20,000 square miles of surface, and I thought of all that ocean of water meeting at that point and falling on the cruel, jagged rocks below with its tremendous impact, and then I thought of God causing all the sin of the world to meet on that devoted head, all the hatreds of the wars, the scisms, the lost, the impurities, the murders, everything in the catalog meeting on Jesus Christ's devoted head, "for in HIS own body He bore our sins."

I confess I could not understand it, but I had

to believe the awful statement that the sins of the world had met in penalty upon him. Then I thought of this. You are a Godly man, you walk with God all through your life; you have lived a clean life: some day, in a sudden moment of weakness, overcome by a sudden temptation, you commit a grievous sin. Can you imagine a greater horror in your soul than the consciousness of the guilt of a great sin in your life after you have lived a pure one? Well, can any human imagination conceive of what it must have meant in the soul of the only perfect man in the universe when He hung there, the lamb of God, bearing all the sins of the world? Yes, I know it is a mystery; I don't know how far Jesus Christ ever entered into the consciousness of that sin but it is appalling to think of what it must have been and what it cost Him to cover our lame feet today, with His shed blood, the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

*Mephibosheth himself said nothing  
about his own lame feet.*

He kept them under the King's table of grace, and rejoiced that he was shown kindness *for the sake of another*. It was not because he was not conscious of them; nobody in that city of Jerusalem knew his lameness better than he. I fancy many a time as he came down the streets of the city with his distorted feet swinging between his crutches, that the jeers and the scoffings and the sneers of the rabble

were hurled at the boy; nobody knew more keenly and distressingly that he had lame feet than Mephibosheth, but he said nothing about them, just kept them under the King's table, and rejoiced that he was accepted in the beloved. "His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

Christian people come to me and say to me: "My life is so cold, it is so indifferent, so fruitless, it must be offensive to God, it breaks me down and discourages me and hurts my service as I look at it" Well, dear friend, settle this forever." In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Settle it that you are a lame-footed folk; settle it that God knows it, and looks upon us with tender compassion; then put your feet under the King's table where they belong, and praise God that you are beloved and accepted and cleansed and forgiven and born of God and destined to glory for the sake of another.

I have a beloved sister. She has one son, a fine, handsome boy in the thirties. Suppose he should come into my office in Pittsburgh, a perfect hobo in appearance, unkempt hair, shocking hat, torn shoes, shabby trousers. He sits down in my office; we chat a while. Then I say: "Come, Charles, I want you to go to lunch with me." He looks up and says: "I cannot go to lunch with you, Uncle James." I say: "Why?" He says: "Look at my torn shoes; look at my trousers; look at my sore need of a haircut; look at my shabby tramp-like appearance; I cannot go to lunch with you," and I say: "No, my lad, I

am not looking at these at all. I am looking at the beloved sister, whom I see with my eyes of love, back of you, and you are accepted in the beloved. That is why I want you to be with me."

We hurt ourselves; we mar our service; we bring ourselves into the place of disheartenedness and discouragement by centering our eyes on our own spiritual lame-footedness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust," yet He loveth us with an everlasting love, and has covered our lame feet with a token of His grace.

*The people at the table said nothing about Mephibosheth's lame feet.*

We can search the chapters for any word of comment about the crippled boy's lame feet from the people who sat with him. Down deep in the human heart somehow there is a tendency to uncover the lame-footedness of other people, to drag forth into the garish day their foibles and their weaknesses and their frailties, and to comment on them, usually with not much kindness of comment,—but that is not Christlike, and that is not God's beautiful way. In the wonderful love chapter He says: "Love believeth all things; beareth all things, keepeth all things, endureth all things," but that first word, "beareth," in the Greek testament means "covereth." Love covereth all

things. You say of your husband, "If he had thought a moment, he would never have done that." You say: "My boy would never have said that scorching thing if he had been himself." How quickly we would cover all the weaknesses of those whom we love. That is what God asks of us. "Love covereth all things" and David with Christlike patience and love covered the boy's lame feet, said nothing about them, even as God for Christ's sake has covered ours.

Someone has said "Test anything you are about to say about a friend by this three-fold test: "Is it true, is it loving, is it necessary?" Is it true? If it is not, not one of us has a right to speak it. But it is not enough to speak the truth. People say, "Well, I am a man who speaks my mind." It is not enough to speak your mind. You may speak it so roughly and so cruelly and bluntly that you may stab to the heart some friend. It is not enough to speak the truth; you must speak the truth in love. Is it necessary? There are some things that are even true and loving that are not necessary to say. How much suffering and agony and brokenheartedness from the tongues of gossip and backbiting would be saved if we embodied that beautiful rule in our lives.

May these lessons from the lame-footed boy bring us peace and joy and rest, as we realize the atoning, covering, blessed work of God in Christ Jesus to us who sit today at the table of the King's grace, with *all* our lame-footedness out of sight, covered by His love.

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