

'I Will Give Thanks'

In two previous articles we've looked at the life of David in the Old Testament to gain godly principles that will help us in times of relational conflict and betrayal. I briefly noted last time that, apart from being rightly related to God through the perfect work of Jesus Christ, we can never assume that these principles will apply directly to our lives. However, God's people should recognize the guidance we receive from God's Word and the strength that God gives us by his Spirit as we strive toward honest, relational reconciliation. Let me list, once again, the five principles that we've gleaned so far from Psalm 54 and the historical narrative (1 Samuel 23) connected to David writing his Psalm.

- We must always look to God's Word for direction and guidance for our lives.
- Obeying God's Word does not mean that we will never experience trouble. (David was betrayed after obeying God).
- Continue to go to God in prayer.
- It's good to receive godly counsel and encouragement from faithful friends.
- God providentially protects his people according to his perfect plan for our lives (see Romans 8:28).

Psalm 54 concludes with worship. David's trust is in a Sovereign and loving God who will always bring good out of the difficulties of his life. "With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good" (Psalm 54:6). This brings us to our last principle from Psalm 54:

- God is worthy of our worship and our worship of him should not depend on our circumstances or their outcome.

Old Testament scholar, Derek Kidner notes that David offers a 'freewill offering' to show that his worship is not dependent upon everything turning out as he hopes, e.g., 'If you do this God, then I'll offer my worship to you.' Rather, David's worship is spontaneous which shows his ultimate trust in God in all situations. No matter what is going on in our lives, like David in Psalm 54, we too, have much to be thankful for. When our hearts are truly motivated by thankfulness that God has reconciled us to himself in Jesus Christ, we will consistently desire healthy relationships with others, e.g., within our marriages, extended family, friendships at work, church, etc. Below are a few concluding biblical principles to help us in seeking healthy relationships.

- In every situation of relational conflict, we are called to search our hearts and see if our own sin has, in any way, contributed to this situation (Matthew 7:3-5).
- If possible, depending on the particular situation, overlook the fault in love (1 Peter 4:8).
- If it is not possible to overlook this sin, or perceived sin, against you, first go to them in private. "If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matthew 18:15). If there is unresolved

conflict between Christians in the church, it may be necessary to involve the pastor and other church leaders (Matthew 18:16-17).

—God’s word determines how we’re to treat others as we work through the process of reconciliation with someone we believe has wronged us, e.g., “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 6:44).

—It is crucial that we are always ready and willing to truly forgive another from the heart. Reconciliation in relationships is at the heart of the gospel as well as our Christian witness. Since Jesus Christ has forgiven us all our sins, how can we ever withhold true forgiveness from others? “...forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive” (Colossians 3:13).

Unless we seek to forgive others from the heart, we take the very real chance of a ‘root of bitterness springing up in our hearts.’ This is harmful to us and to others around us (Hebrews 12:15) as we wallow in pride and self-pity. My prayer is that we always ask God to give us the strength to seek biblical reconciliation and true peace with others. “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

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