

## **'God Is My Helper'**

In my previous article we began looking at Psalm 54, as well as the historical incident connected to the Psalm (1 Samuel 23), to see principles of how God helps us in times of relational conflict and betrayal. It's important to note as we begin that, although we may gain life principles out of Old Testament narratives, we should never fail to look at the ways in which God's word in the Old Testament anticipates and prepares for the coming of Jesus Christ. The sinful kings in Israel's history, including David, pointed forward to the sinless King who would rule with perfect justice. Apart from being rightly related to God through the finished work of Jesus, we cannot assume that the principles that we're seeing will apply directly to our lives. Last time we noted three principles:

- We must always look to God's Word for direction and guidance for our lives.
- Following God's Word doesn't mean that everything will always turn out as we hoped, at least in the short term (David is betrayed after obeying God).
- Continue to go to God in prayer.

Before we go further in Psalm 54, I want to refer, once again, to an incident that happened in the narrative of 1 Samuel 23. Just after the betrayal of David by the people of Keilah and just as David was being betrayed by the Ziphites, David met with his dear friend, Jonathan, in the 'Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.' It was at this time that Jonathan 'strengthened [David's] hand in God.' Notice that Jonathan is encouraging David from God's truth. God had told David that he would replace Saul as king, and Jonathan encouraged David to rely on God's promise (1 Samuel 16; 23:15ff). This leads us to our fourth principle:

- It's good to receive godly counsel and encouragement from faithful friends.

This is an important principle that we all need to be reminded of. We often choose not to get involved when there's conflict but we have a responsibility to stand with and encourage those in relational conflict who are seeking to stand for godly principles and precepts.

Going back to Psalm 54, I want to look at a sad truth that often dominates the lives of those who cause conflict. The text says, "For strangers have risen against me...they do not set God before themselves" (vs. 3). The word translated 'strangers' doesn't necessarily refer to someone unknown to David. The word can carry the nuance of someone who's 'estranged' from God which points to someone who is acting 'unlawfully' or against God's ways. This is a person who will betray another or cause conflict in a relationship because they are self-consumed and only want their way rather than God's, at least in that moment.

As we move on to verse 4, I want to call attention to another way in which God works to protect his people. The text says, "God is my helper and the upholder of my life." Interestingly, in the narrative from 1 Samuel 23 when the Ziphites betray David to Saul, Saul goes down to Ziph with the intention of ending David's life. In the process of maneuvering his troops to capture David the text records that Saul was closing in on David and his men (vs. 26). Victory seemed within Saul's grasp. But suddenly, a messenger arrives and gives Saul some news that

temporarily changes his wicked plans. “Hurry and come....the Philistines have made a raid against the land” (vs. 27). Saul is forced to pull away from capturing David and go and fight the Philistines. The place was called “The Rock of Escape” (vs. 28). This leads to our fifth principle: —God providentially protects his people according to his perfect plan for our lives. No matter how diligent we may be in seeking guidance from God’s Word or in fervently lifting up our prayers to him, we can never, ourselves, either know the future or perfectly make plans for every contingency that may arise. But, we can trust that God is always watching over us and working all things together for our good and his glory (Romans 8:28). Like David, in times of trouble we can say, ‘God is my helper’ (Psalm 54:4).

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.