Betrayal: When Trust is Lost

One of the most devastating issues that we can face in life is betrayal. It can happen in a myriad of relationships including: marriages, relationships within the church, close friendships in our workplace, etc. Betrayal can cripple us spiritually, physically and emotionally and it isn't hard to see why this happens; in betrayal there's inevitably a loss of trust with someone we've relied on, shared life with or that we believed shared our values. Along with the loss of trust, betrayal is often accompanied by gossip and slander. Again, all of this connected to someone— or some group of people—who we were either very close to personally or, at least, we had reason to believe that we could trust them to do what is right. Given the fact that betrayal has touched most, if not all, of our lives, let's look at some ways in which God's word gives us important guidance in dealing with betrayal. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson has written that narrative accounts in scripture show us the '…ways of God with men, and teach what God requires of us, does for us and works out through us.' The primary text that we'll be looking at in considering the topic of betrayal is Psalm 54 which was written by David. This Psalm is historically connected to an incident recorded in 1 Samuel at a time when David was running from King Saul and his armies and fearing for his life.

Beginning in 1 Samuel 23, David is told that the Philistines, enemies of God's people, are attacking the city of Keilah. Initially, David and his men fear that if they come out of hiding to help the Keilahites, Saul will find them. With God's assurance (1 Samuel 23:4), David and his men come out of hiding, go down to Keilah, defeat the Philistines and save the people of Keilah from certain destruction. From our look at the historical narrative thus far, we should note our first important principle:

— We must always look to God's Word for direction and guidance for our lives. David sought guidance from God before acting on behalf of the people of Keilah (1 Samuel 23:2).

Amazingly, after this, the people of Keilah betray David by going and telling Saul where to find David and his men. Interestingly, the people of Keilah were a part of the same tribe as David—the tribe of Judah. These were David's people! Thankfully, God protected David and he and his men fled before Saul could catch them. This introduces our second principle:

— Following God's Word is always the right thing to do. God has never promised that life won't be difficult or that people won't betray us. But we are always better off, ultimately, when we trust God's Word.

Following the betrayal by the people of Keilah, David was once again betrayed, this time by the Ziphites (1 Samuel 23:19; see superscription of Psalm 54) who were also from the tribe of Judah. What have we observed thus far? David was betrayed by people that he should have been able to trust. Although it can happen for a number of reasons, at its core, betrayal is connected to self-centeredness and pride. Those who betray the trust of another often believe that they deserve something better than they're getting in the relationship and they're convinced that what they want is what's best for them. In David's case, the Keilahites and

Ziphites likely believed that, by betraying David, they would place themselves in the good graces of King Saul.

As we leave the historical narrative in 1 Samuel and begin our look directly at Psalm 54, notice the plea from David to God. "O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth." From Psalm 54 verses 1-2 we learn a third principle:

—Continue to go to God in fervent prayer.

Keep in mind that God works mightily in the lives of his Covenant people and we see this already in the life of David. We'll look further in my next article at how this Psalm of David's gives us more biblical principles that can help those who've been betrayed.

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