

Reconciliation When You Have Been Falsely Accused 2 Samuel 19:24-30 compared with Romans 12

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 3-23-2014

Introduction

Many years before I became a pastor, I worked at a company where the manager did everything possible to get me fired. The manager told my boss outright lies about me. I was cussed out in public for doing exactly what the manager had just told me to do, and when I meekly went to do what the new task was, I was publically cussed out for doing that. I was repeatedly put into no-win situations. And I think the goal was to get me to have an angry outburst so that I could be legitimately fired. I was told how to do jobs that I knew were backwards to the way they should be done. It was an extremely tough situation to work in.

And my wife could tell that I was getting bitter. She sympathized with me, but she also encouraged me to not let my manager get under my skin. And as soon as she pointed it out I recognized the anger and bitterness and confessed it to the Lord. And we took Romans 12:21 as my theme verse: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” And now you know why I repeat that one so much. Kathy and I strategized on how to declare a war of love, using Romans 12:9-21 as a guide. We prayed for and asked God to bless my manager, which I will have to admit initially felt like gravel in my mouth because my manager didn’t deserve to be blessed. But I did it in faith anyway. And we had a whole list of things that were part of our war of love.

And over time, God gave me a supernatural joy in blessing when I had been cursed, doing good for the person when I had been stabbed in the back, giving praise to the manager when I had been torn down, asking God to give my manager a raise and to give a newbie who had been promoted ahead of me a pay raise when I had never been give one and saying “Lord, bless them,” baking cakes, and in other ways doing my best to overcome evil with good. And initially it felt like that paralytic whom Jesus commanded to stretch forth his hand. He could have responded, “What are you talking about? I can’t stretch forth my hand. It’s paralyzed. You are commanding me to do the impossible. You have to heal it first, and then I will stretch it forth.” But no, Jesus wanted him to attempt the impossible by faith and watch Him come through. And God did. So I was that paralytic who said, “Ok Lord, I will do it.” As I worked out Romans 12:9-21 by faith, God began working supernatural graces within me.

And I would encourage you to read that passage sometime. When you dig into that passage, it is a remarkable set of instructions on how to pursue reconciliation (which, remember, has been the main them of our chapter) when the other person doesn't want to be reconciled (which is the subject of today's passage). Now, I will hasten to say that Romans 12 doesn't guarantee that you will win that other person to God's grace. There are no guarantees. That's part of what makes obedience so hard. During the first year of my war of love, it seemed to make no difference whatsoever in the other person. But it made a fabulous difference within my heart. I was freed from bitterness, anger, brooding, holding a grudge, envy, and other negative inward sins. In place of those things, God instilled in my heart a love and compassion for the other person. I actually felt sorry for my manager.

Now, prior to that experience I had outwardly tried to be nice. That's a counterfeit Christianity that avoids the supernatural. It was only what my flesh could do. Sometimes we Christians try to be sanctified by our own efforts. And we have a modicum of outward success. But it's not Christ living through me. So though I controlled my outward responses, my inward ones were still ugly. And I think that was one of the reasons why God put me through those difficult circumstances. They forced me to go beyond a superficial outward niceness and into the realm of the supernatural. And over the course of the next year I became thankful that God had entrusted me with a Romans 12 test, and it was the beginning of a walk of joy that could come from God alone, love that is dependent upon God alone, peace that is dependent upon God alone. It was a pivotal turning point in my life for which I will always be grateful. Was it still painful? Yes. But after a year of sowing the seeds of Romans 12 into the realm of the Spirit, I not only saw a huge harvest within my own life, I began to see a change in my manager and over the next months we actually became friends. We were reconciled, even though my manager never admitted to doing wrong. And that is the subject of today's passage. It's going a step beyond our previous sermons. Is it possible to pursue reconciliation even when you have been falsely accused and totally wronged?

Now I can't guarantee that I know Mephibosheth's heart. I actually have one commentary that is convinced that Mephibosheth was faking his mourning for David. Most do not. Most think that he is a remarkable testimony to grace. But I can't guarantee that. I can't guarantee that Mephibosheth was declaring a war of love like that commanded in Romans 12. But on the surface this passage highlights Romans 12 so amazingly, that I do not think it is a coincidence. I am personally persuaded that God's grace

was just as powerfully at work in this chapter as it was in Mephibosheth's life in chapter 9. Everyone agrees that he is a picture of grace in that chapter. So, while I cannot guarantee that Mephibosheth is a Romans 12 candidate, I will be assuming that to be true throughout this sermon. In any case, every point comes from Romans 12 too.

But I want to begin by reading from chapter 16 where Mephibosheth had been slandered. Mephibosheth had asked his servant to saddle a donkey for him so that he could ride out to David and deliver a large supply of food. He loved David and was grieved over this turn of events, so he wanted to be the first one to minister to David's needs. David had done so much for him that it was his joy to return the favor. *Finally* he could do something that David actually needed. An earlier chapter said that he was lame in both his feet and could not walk, so he was no use to David on the other side of the Jordan. But he could at least help David in this immediate crisis. But look what happens in chapter 16, verses 1-4.

2Sam. 16:1 When David was a little past the top *of the mountain*, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred *loaves* of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine.

2Sam. 16:2 And the king said to Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?" ¶ So Ziba said, "The donkeys *are* for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."

2Sam. 16:3 ¶ Then the king said, "And where *is* your master's son?" ¶ And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.'"

That was absolute slander. Mephibosheth, who was lame and couldn't walk, had actually asked his servant to put *him* on a donkey so that he could bring this stuff to David. He loved David, and this slander that turned David against him would have been extremely, extremely painful. This slander alienated him from the one who was his best friend. And not only does David believe Ziba's story, he punishes Mephibosheth in verse 4 for something he didn't do.

2Sam. 16:4 ¶ So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that *belongs* to Mephibosheth *is* yours." ¶ And Ziba said, "I humbly bow before you, *that* I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!"

So that is the context of emotional hurt that Mephibosheth had experienced. And in terms of timing, several weeks have gone by. The war was finished within a week of David's fleeing Jerusalem, but David has sent emissaries throughout Israel asking them to bring him back as king. And

quite a bit of time has elapsed as the tribes debate what to do. David asked the priests, Zadok and Abiathar to do mediation, and David returns after an unspecified period of weeks. We aren't sure exactly the length of time that has transpired but it is more than the week of the rebellion.

But this is the important background to realize: through this whole time David has been under the misunderstanding that Mephibosheth has betrayed him and wanted to be king in his place. This whole time David thought that Ziba was the generous one who had helped them, when every bit of that food belonged to Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth's generosity is attributed to another. In fact, instead of thinking that Mephibosheth is *generous*, he thinks Mephibosheth is *greedy*. This whole time David has been thinking that Mephibosheth had stabbed him in the back after all that David had done for him. So it is a horrible misunderstanding. And it would have been easy for Mephibosheth to become extremely bitter against his servant, Ziba, and to resign himself to the fact that he would be forever alienated from his best friend, David. That's the context – and it is an important one.

I. Even though you have been wronged, be the first to seek reconciliation (v. 24a)

But even though Mephibosheth has been the one 100% wronged, he is the first one to make a move towards reconciliation. And it took some effort to do so. Chapter 19, beginning to read at verse 24:

2Sam. 19:24 ¶ Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king....

Commentators point out that the trip from Jerusalem to where they were fording the river was 21 miles descending 3700 feet. We will look at an objection of where he traveled from or to in a moment. But in most commentators' minds it is crystal clear that he traveled from Jerusalem to the Jordan. And if this is true, it was a long trip for this cripple to make on donkey back. If you've ever ridden a donkey, you know it's a pretty rough ride. He could have just waited till David arrived in Jerusalem and met him there. Yet despite the inconvenience, and despite the fact that he was the one who had been grossly wronged, he initiated reconciliation. At least *that* much is clear.

And this is so contrary to human nature. The tendency when we have been wronged is to either come out slugging (the opposite of peace making – Ken Sande calls that peace breaking) or to painfully distance ourselves (which Ken Sande calls peace faking). One of the peace faking modes that people adopt is to flee from conflict rather than dealing with conflict. Some

people are so conflict averse that they deny that there even are any problems. But true peace making seeks to be reconciled by dealing with issues, and that is exactly what Mephibosheth seeks to do. And Jesus made clear that whether you are at fault or the other person is at fault, you should take the initiative.

And that is tough. Why should *I* be the first one to make a move? It's the other person who sinned against me." Let me read from page 150 of Ken Sande's book, *The Peace Maker*. He said,

I recall one Sunday when I visited a small ranching community and preached a message on Matthew 5:21-24. After church a friend took me out to lunch. Part way through our meal, a man I had seen in church that morning walked into the restaurant. Seeing me, he came over to our table, smiling with delight.

"I have to tell you what just happened!" he said. "Your sermon really shook me up, because I've got a neighbor who hasn't talked to me for two years. We had an argument about where to run a fence. When I wouldn't move it to where he thought it should be, he just turned his back on me and stomped away. Since I thought I was in the right, I've always figured it was up to him to make the first move at being friends again. This morning I saw that the Lord wants *me* to be the one to seek reconciliation, so right after church I drove over to his house to talk with him. I told him I was sorry for being so stubborn two years ago and that I wanted to be friends again. He just about fell over. He said he felt bad all along for stomping away that day, but he didn't know how to come talk with me. Man, was he glad I came to talk with him!"¹

Not all situations turn out that well, but Romans 12 calls us to seek reconciliation *even when we have been wronged*. For some people, that is tough to swallow. Rather than getting even Romans 12 tells us to not avenge ourselves. Rather than getting furious it calls us to give place to wrath. Rather than waiting for the other person, it tells us to do everything in our power to be reconciled. Now, it's not always possible, but Paul says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (v. 18). So point I is saying that even if you have been wronged, it's your responsibility. It's not natural, and it doesn't feel right, but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said that you demonstrate yourselves to be children of God if you can do what no pagan would naturally do. It doesn't take any grace to love those who love you. But it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to rejoice when you are persecuted, to love when you are hated, and to reach out to those who have hurt you. Like that paralytic, we are called to step into the supernatural.

¹ Ken Sande, *The Peace Maker* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 150.

II. Don't let the other person's alienation alienate your heart (v. 24b)

The second point says, "Don't let the other person's alienation alienate your heart." Verse 24 again:

2Sam. 19:24 ¶ Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace.

Those were Jewish signs of mourning. And when did it start? You might think he is mourning because he lost his property. No. This mourning did not start with Ziba's slander. It started from the very day that David fled until David was returned in peace. So he mourned for David before he was slandered and after he was slandered. David's alienation did not change his heart for David. And this is remarkable because hurt feelings can often produce the exact opposite. In the devotional, *Our Daily Bread*, F. J. Huegel was quoted as saying, "Just remember that more Christians go on the rocks, defeated, over the nasty thing we call 'hurt feelings' than over the so-called great crises which test the very fiber of the soul."² Don't give in to what those hurt feelings make you want to do. Chapter 5 of Ken Sande's book, *The Peace Maker* brilliantly shows that conflict starts in the heart and can only be resolved if the heart issues are resolved. Matthew 15:19 says that every sin, including conflict, arises from the idol factory of the heart. James 4:1-3 says,

James 4:1 Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?

James 4:2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war...

And it goes on to discuss these idolatrous inward desires that we must put under the feet of King Jesus. Ken Sande says,

These passages describe the root cause of conflict: *unmet desires in our hearts*. When we want something and feel that we will not be satisfied unless we get it, those desires starts to control us. If others fail to meet our desires, we sometimes condemn them in our hearts and fight harder to get our own way.

And he goes on to show the progression from I desire, to I demand, to I judge, to I punish. And his book brilliantly shows how the heart issues must be dealt with or our efforts at reconciliation will constantly be frustrated. Since 2 Samuel 19 doesn't give us the solution, I will leave you to read that chapter for how to deal with these heart issues. The whole book by

² *Our Daily Bread*, December 6, 1986.

Ken Sande is must reading for the whole church. But I am just pointing out that somehow, by God's grace, Mephibosheth's heart was not poisoned towards David, even though David had promised to confiscate everything that he owned.

Discipleship Journal had an interesting story written by Roy Anthony Borges, who is still serving his 45-year prison sentence in a Florida penitentiary for robbery. I never have understood how these long prison sentences can be considered just. Restitution would be so much better. But anyway, God can use even the wrath of man to praise Him, and Roy came to Christ in that penitentiary. And it was there that he was tested on exactly this point. Let me quote a little section from his article. He said,

“Where the strong prey on the weak, loving your enemies can seem self-destructive. Rodney stole my radio and headphones while I was in the prison yard playing volleyball. I had no way to prove it and, since we couldn't receive more gifts at the time, couldn't replace them.

“The old Roy wanted to knock that wisecrack grin off Rodney's face. That's how I had solved my problems in the past. God's been teaching me another way, however, since I became a Christian. He tells me vengeance is His. I decided to pray for Rodney.

“Later, my job as a prison law clerk took me to the confinement cells. Rodney's days of stealing from other prisoners had caught up with him. As I passed his cell, he asked if I remembered him.

"Sure, you're the guy who stole my radio."

"That weren't me," he lied.

“That's all right, Rodney, I forgive you.’

Which I'm not sure is what Luke calls us to say before a person has repented. But anyway, it shows that his heart was right. He goes on:

I forgot about Rodney stealing my radio and thought more about the fact that Jesus loved him. Soon I found myself helping Rodney and telling him about Jesus. Then one day I saw him kneeling next to his bunk reading the Bible, and I knew that good had overcome evil.³

So there is the testimony of a guy who is currently in prison experiencing the powerful grace of God just like Mephibosheth had. Good

³ Roy Anthony Borges in *Discipleship Journal* (9-10-98), quoted in *Men of Integrity*, Vol. 2, no. 4.

had overcome evil because Roy had not given in to his old feelings of rage and alienation. He was putting off the old and putting on the new. Now, we did clarify from Luke last week that the verbal offering of forgiveness comes after a person's repentance, and not all evangelicals are clear on that. Nevertheless, his heart had let that go, and that's so important. His heart was not alienated simply because David's heart was. And sometimes this is extremely difficult to do and requires us to cry out to God for His supernatural. But some people don't even want the supernatural. They are quite content to live in the natural. But this sermon is a call to go beyond that.

III. Do what is in your power to seek an audience (v. 25a)

Point III - Do what is in your power to seek an audience with the person who is alienated from you. And last week we saw that people who are in a vulnerable situation sometimes need to involve third parties. But Mephibosheth has enough courage that he was able to do this on his own. With the slander that David had believed, it could have been very scary for him. But verse 25 begins, "So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king..." That was his purpose; he wanted to seek an audience with the king.

And by the way, many versions translate this as "from Jerusalem" rather than "to Jerusalem." And you might wonder why. That's a pretty significant difference. But it's easily explained - there is no preposition in the Hebrew, so translators need to supply either the preposition "to" or "from." You have to guess from the context which one it is. In this case, I believe the NKJV got it wrong. My commentaries agree with the NIV, NASB, HCSB, and other versions in saying that Mephibosheth had traveled from Jerusalem to the Jordan River for several reasons. Let me give you three. First, chapter 16:3 says that Mephibosheth remained in Jerusalem during the rebellion. That was his home. So if he was already in Jerusalem, he could hardly come to Jerusalem. Secondly, verse 24 has already said that he came *down* to meet the king, and the only way to go *down* would be away from Jerusalem toward the Jordan River. It was a 21-mile trip that descended 3700 feet. So the word "down" indicates he is coming from Jerusalem toward David. And thirdly, the Hebrew grammar in verse 31 begins with a waw consecutive, a Hebrew grammatical structure that indicates sequence. To me this is slam-dunk. It indicates that Barzillai's meeting of David took place next, and in verse 31 David is still at the Jordan at that point. So there is no way that they should have added a "to" instead of a "from." So if the translations that make this coming "from Jerusalem" are correct (which I am

100% convinced that they are), this makes Mephibosheth's efforts even more accentuated. As a cripple, he truly was doing all that was in his power to seek an audience with the one who was alienated. But either way, the critical point is that he sought David out.

You are probably all familiar with the Rwandan massacres of Tutsis in the early 1990s. Every time I think about that event it makes me mad at the United Nations who assisted the murderers. The Hutu majority had planned a massacre of the Tutsis for months, spreading hatred via radio, calling the Tutsi's cockroaches that needed to be exterminated. Interestingly, the Belgium peacekeepers had intercepted documents that clearly proved that the government was planning a massacre of the Tutsis after the United Nations had finished rounding up all of the guns. And they gave that document to the president of the United Nations, and he told them to stand down and not tell anyone. Anyway, as soon as the guns were all rounded up, the Hutu government started butchering Tutsis. Over one million Tutsis were murdered over a period of 100 days. That's 10,000 every day, 400 every hour for 100 days. It was genocide.

Well, a remarkable autobiography came out in 2008 by Frida Gashumba, one of the Tutsis who had survived. She talked about the head teacher of her school asking all Tutsis stand and to be mocked. So she felt the racial hatred long before the holocaust. But when the massacres started, Frida watched her family being butchered before her eyes. She knew the man who killed her father. It was a miracle that she was not found. A Hutu neighbor who was ashamed of Hutu behavior hid her at great risk to his own life. But the horrors of what she saw emotionally scarred her. And you could certainly understand that.

Well, later, Frida became a Christian, and very painfully and slowly saw some measure of emotional healing. And she says that one day the Holy Spirit convicted her that she needed to forgive the man who had murdered her father. She visited him in prison, but when she saw him she was so emotionally overwhelmed that she fled. Weeks later she returned and was able to talk with him and tell him that she forgave him. So that was going even beyond what Christ had called her to do in the Gospel of Luke. But she said that when she did that, an overwhelming peace came over her and she sensed God's forgiveness for her own sins to an unprecedented degree. She was living out point III.

One day she went to visit an old neighbor by the name of Elina. As she sat in Elina's home she suddenly realized that all of the cupboards,

plates, cups, and glasses in that room had been stolen from her house. Elina's children were wearing some of Frida's old clothes. When Frida asked for a drink of water, she was served the water in a glass that had been taken from her own home. And as Elina realized what the awkward situation was, she was deeply embarrassed. But Frida immediately said, "I have not come to take anything from you. I have come to make peace with you." She was initiating. Frida drank the water and prayed for Elina. Frida says, "My neighbour herself just shook her head and opened her mouth as if to speak, but she could not find any words. Shortly afterwards I left her home with these words: 'Peace be with you.'"

Your attempts at getting an audience may not be as stressful as hers were, but it illustrates that the awesome work of God's grace sometimes makes us take courageous steps of faith like this that may initially feel just as impossible as Peter getting out of the boat and coming to Christ. Like the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 12 calls us to do what the flesh cannot do. And if you justify your rejection of Romans 12 by saying that it is too hard, the sermon on the Mount says that you are not demonstrating sonship. Sons and daughters can be like their adoptive father. They have the power of the Spirit. They can go beyond the natural. That's the message of the Sermon on the Mount.

IV. Don't lash out when your character is questioned (v. 25b-26a)

Point IV says, "Don't lash out when your character is questioned. I'm sure it would have been easy to react negatively to David's words in verses 25-26:

2Sam. 19:25 ... the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?"

2Sam. 19:26 And he answered, "My lord, O king..."

And then comes an answer that, while telling the truth and confronting sin, did not lash out in the least. Romans 12 admonishes us not to return tit for tat and it says,

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

The reason this point is so important is because lashing out with anger almost always stirs up anger in the other person and before you know it you aren't discussing the real issues – you are attacking each other. The *sin* is no longer the problem that you are working on; you consider the *person* the problem, and attack *him* rather than attacking the problem. When I think of the way some arguments end up, I think of an old Amos and Andy routine

where Amos is always thumping Andy on the chest, and it irritates the daylights out of Andy. And fed up with it, Andy finally says, “I’ll fix him. I’ll strap this dynamite to my chest and the next time Amos thumps me on the chest, he’ll blow his hand off.” That’s what lashing out in anger does – yeah, it hurts the other person, but it damages me too. We cannot put on the call to gentleness, love, and patience that we find in Romans 12 in our own strength. Those things are fruit of the Spirit, and we can only claim those things by faith as we step out and obey God’s command to not return evil for evil. Lashing out breaks peace rather than making peace. And Ken Sande has a whole chapter on how to accomplish this. It’s chapter 8 – “Speaking The Truth In Love.” And he goes step by step on how to maximize your speech so that it becomes peace making, not peace breaking or peace faking. I’m not going to give you his answers, but I hope by the end of the sermon that you are motivated to get the book and read it. This passage on Mephibosheth doesn’t give you the answers; it just shows you the result. But I am hoping that it motivates you to want to be a Mephibosheth.

V. Make sure you approach the person humbly (“my lord the king” 5 times; “your slave” three times)

Point V - since lashing out often arises out of pride, point V says, “Make sure you approach the person humbly.” Five times in his short speech Mephibosheth calls David, “my lord the king,” and three times he literally calls himself, “your slave.” It’s almost like he is going overboard to let David know that he wants to confront this problem humbly.

Of course that’s easier said than done. It’s easy to almost instantaneously have our pride rising up when we are mistreated. But that’s where our previous homework on crucifying pride and putting on the humility that flows from God’s throne comes into play. We saw that each Person of the Trinity exhibits unbelievable humility and produces that humility within us. And I won’t repeat what we said on this before, but let me tie this in with Romans 12 to show that this is not Mephibosheth being a wimp. He is not being a doormat here. He is being a peacemaker by confronting the real issue in a humble way. This is evidence of grace. Paul said in Romans 12:3,

Rom. 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith

By faith we put on humility, and without humility the reconciliation process is often short-circuited. Paul not only calls himself a fellow slave, but later says,

Rom. 14:4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

In effect Paul is saying that we are not our own, we have been bought with a price, and we have no rights that God cannot take away. The sooner we see ourselves as God's slaves and that everything we have, including our rights, belong to God and are at His sovereign disposal, the sooner we will gain victory over lashing out to protect our pride and to protect our rights.

VI. Be calm when explaining controversial truth (v. 26b-27a)

The sixth point is to be calm when explaining controversial truth. Again, for some people this is almost an impossibility. Their emotions have never been sanctified to Lord. And we spent a great deal of time in a previous sermon on how to do that. But let's deal with the fact that this is not passivity. This is confronting the problem with truth. As I have already mentioned, Paul is no wimp in Romans 12. Some people look down on that chapter's call to bless those who curse and to overcome evil with good and think it's being a doormat. No, it is the exact opposite. It takes far more grace to calmly confront the problem with truth than it does to either ignore the problem or lash out against it. I want you to notice that Romans 12 does not call us to simply roll over and agree with false accusations when trying to deal with controversies. Instead, verse 9 says.

Rom. 12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

So it's not calling for the false peace that asks for forgiveness for things that aren't sins just to get the other person off our back. That would be hypocrisy. That's not truthful. It would be failing to abhor what is evil and failing to cling to what is good. We should value the truth and oppose error, and when seeking reconciliation, it is important to clear the air about misunderstandings and outright falsehoods that have hindered the relationship. And Mephibosheth does exactly that. Verse 26:

2Sam. 19:26 ¶ And he answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,' because your servant *is* lame.

2Sam. 19:27 And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king...

In these circumstances it is important to describe the sin as it really is – in this case, slander and deceit. And David himself had the wool pulled over his own eyes. If Mephibosheth had not been clear on what the sin was,

it would not be possible for David to get undeceived. You don't have to take sins against you lying down. But at the same time, notice the calmness with which Mephibosheth speaks. He had his emotions under control. Failure to be calm has gotten me into trouble on occasion and kept us from clearly discussing what has come between us. Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*, gives several ways that you can pursue the truth, but keep emotions out of it even when the other person is resisting you. One way is to think of exactly what you are going to say ahead of time, and think of potential responses that a David might bring, and how you will answer those responses. But if you recognize this point to be a problem for you, then prayerfully start studying *The Peace Maker*.

VII. Don't treat the other person like an idiot (v. 27b)

Point VII. I want you to notice that in doing this, Mephibosheth does not talk down to David or treat him like an idiot. In verse 27 he continues saying, "but my lord the king *is* like the angel of God." Angel literally means messenger because angels often bring messages from God's throne. He may be acknowledging that David is a prophet, but he certainly is respecting David. In much the same way, Romans 12:10 says,

Rom. 12:10 *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

How do you give preference to one another when the other person has misrepresented you? It's by receiving from God a love that believes the best, hopes the best, and expresses respect. I have seen children get the exact opposite of what they are demanding simply because of the disrespectful way that they speak to their parents. If you treat the other party as if he is an idiot, don't be surprised if he doesn't respond well to even the best of your rational arguments. When you put people down their emotions tend to kick in, and emotions tend to cloud rational discourse. So be respectful, and for sure, don't treat the other person as if he is an idiot. David believed the worst about Mephibosheth, not because he was an idiot, but because he had very limited information and Ziba had given him a good story. Now, David may have *felt* like an idiot by the end of this story, but Mephibosheth didn't treat him that way.

VIII. Don't use manipulation or force; trust God to work in others (v. 27c)

The eighth point is, "Don't use manipulation or force." Mephibosheth says, "Therefore do *what is* good in your eyes." He does the best that he can to present his evidence, and trusts God to work in David. Peace breakers

have a hard time trusting God's grace to open other people's eyes and to change their hearts. They feel like it is all up to them to either force resolution or manipulate a resolution. But people who are forced into agreeing don't tend to have long-term reconciliation and people who are manipulated into agreeing tend to become resentful. God's way of peacemaking takes all the actions that we should be taking, but at the same time it trusts God for the results. That's why Romans 12 says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Sometimes God does not make it possible, and when he does not, we can be at peace, knowing that we have done our part and that our hands are clean. If there is still a broken relationship, make sure it is not because you have failed to do your responsibilities.

IX. Keep perspective

A. In the ultimate scheme of things, we really deserve far worse (v. 28a)

The ninth point that is so helpful in conflict resolution is to keep perspective. And there are two aspects to keeping perspective in verse 28. The first is to realize that in the ultimate scheme of things, we really deserve far worse than we have gotten. Mephibosheth says, "For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king." He knows that it would have been so easy for David to have killed him off as an enemy, but instead he befriended him. Things could be much worse and indeed were much worse for Mephibosheth, so even if David doesn't believe his explanation, he is willing to live with it. He knows that he didn't deserve what was taken away anyway. He deserved far worse.

Let's try to bring this down to the day-to-day world. Some of you may have heard me complaining about a camera fine that I got from north of Sioux City last year. Prior to traveling through there I knew the area was a speed trap, so I watched my speed like a hawk. That's why I was so surprised to get the huge fine in the mail. Even the picture they sent me shows that my car was in the slowest lane with cars passing me. I didn't have time to go up and fight the fine. But I grumbled about it for a while until I reminded myself of all the times I had sped and hadn't gotten caught. Yes, pastors can blow it too. But realizing that things could have been much worse helped me not to fuss about it so much. If I lived in Sioux City I still would have fought it because it wasn't right, but the realization that I really have had times that I deserved fines and didn't get them helped me to be at ease about it.

Trial Lawyer Clarence Darrow once said, “I have suffered from being misunderstood, but I would have suffered a lot more if I had been understood.” Can you relate to that? I can. Charles Spurgeon said that ultimately you can’t slander human nature since it is far worse than words can paint. So when falsely accused, ask yourself, “Do we really deserve worse in our life?” If so, it will help you to pursue reconciliation even if you don’t get your way. You try, and you leave the results in God’s hands.

B. In the ultimate scheme of things, God has blessed us with far more than we could expect (v. 28b)

The second aspect of keeping perspective is to remind yourself that in the ultimate scheme of things, God has blessed us with far more than we could expect. We tend to focus on what we don’t have rather than on all the incredible blessings that we do have. This was what made the Israelites grumble against God in the wilderness wanderings. They failed to appreciate their vast blessings. And remember that we are not our own. God has purchased us and all that we have, and He has the right to take things and give things as He pleases. So if a particular blessing gets removed, you can remember that you didn’t deserve it in the first place and you have enjoyed far more than you deserve. Mephibosheth says,

Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table.

He still is so grateful for all that David has done, and this gratefulness softens David. Appreciation for all the good in your spouse can make you less negative about the specific things that have come between you. Appreciation about the blessings you have received in this church can make you less negative about the parts that you wish were different.

X. Leave the results in God’s hands (v. 28c)

That leads logically to point X – “Leave the results in God’s hands.” Mephibosheth says, “Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?” On a human level he actually did have the right to not be slandered because the law of God gives that right. But in the big picture, we have no rights because God has purchased them all. And when we have that perspective, we can pursue what we used to think of as rights as responsibilities. In fact, why don’t you turn to Mark chapter 10 to understand how rights can be transformed into responsibilities before God. Mark chapter 10. This is a passage that says that we are simply stewards of all that we have and God can take away any part of our stewardship any time that He wants to test us. God had entrusted the rich young ruler with a huge estate; a huge stewardship trust. Mark 10, beginning to read at verse 17.

Mark 10:17 ¶ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

Mark 10:18 ¶ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God.

This is the first hint that Jesus is challenging this man concerning his understanding of sin and goodness. This man saw himself as good and saw the rabbis as good. And so Jesus asks, “Why do you call Me good?” Are you calling me good because you think I am God? Or are you calling Me good because you don’t have the foggiest idea of the depth of human depravity and you don’t have the foggiest idea of how impossible it is to live according to the standards of God’s laws? So he tests the rich young ruler by doing a Ray Comfort number on him – seeing how he thinks he measures up to God’s law. And it is good if all of us do this. Often intractable conflicts are intractable because we see ourselves as much better than we are and we see ourselves as deserving of much better than we really deserve. So Jesus tests him by quoting the commandments.

Mark 10:19 You know the commandments: “*Do not commit adultery,*’ “*Do not murder,*’ “*Do not steal,*’ “*Do not bear false witness,*’ “*Do not defraud,*’ “*Honor your father and your mother.*’ ”

Mark 10:20 ¶ And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”

This is the same answer that Ray Comfort always gets to his questions. “Yeah, I’ve kept those. I’m pretty good.” This shows the blindness that he had concerning his sinful heart. So Jesus is going to dig a bit deeper on just one commandment and show that the rich young ruler really has not kept any of them.

Mark 10:21 ¶ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

Mark 10:22 ¶ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Those possessions were more important than God to him, so he broke the first commandment. Those possessions were an idol, so he broke the second commandment. They actually belonged to God, so when he refuses to give up the stewardship trust back to God when God called for it, He showed covetousness, theft, a failure to honor authority, a failure to operate in terms of God’s name, etc. Jesus could have done this with any of the other commandments, like the seventh commandment, and shown this man to be a sinner. But just this one request showed how the young man’s concept of goodness and what he deserved were totally skewed. Continuing to read:

Mark 10:23 ¶ Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is

for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

Mark 10:24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!

Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:26 ¶ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

They got it right. It’s not just a rich man’s problem. Everyone has this heart problem. Who can be saved?

Mark 10:27 ¶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

It’s impossible for any man to be saved, but with God, all things are possible.

Mark 10:28 ¶ Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.”

Mark 10:29 ¶ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one [This is an absolute statement – “There is no one”] who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s,

He’s not talking about abandonment, as many Chinese Christians have thought. He’s talking about giving them up to God; no longer owning them; saying, “Father, you can have and take everything. I leave them with you.” But notice that Jesus promises to give back exactly the same things that have been given to Him. So now, they are no longer ours; they belong to God. But what does God do when we leave everything to Him? He says,

Mark 10:30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions [so it won’t be all pain free] —and in the age to come, eternal life.

Mark 10:31 But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.”

When we put ourselves first, we are relating to everything as if it is my rights, what I deserve, what I own. When we put ourselves last it is God’s rights and God’s property to give to me or to take away from me as He please. I have no rights. The only right I have is the right to go to hell. But God has now given me a stewardship trust of my wife. And since she belongs to God, I need to ask God how He wants me to relate to her. God has given me my house, and since it belongs to God, I need to ask God how he wants me to use it. And so long as I have this stewardship attitude toward everything in life, I will enjoy it 100 times more. He’s not talking about giving you 100 husbands (which would be a curse). He is talking about enjoying the stewardship of your husband 100 times more. So for example, if I put myself first, I might get angry at my crying baby because he has kept

me awake for several nights in a row and I am getting frustrated with the loss of sleep. “I have a right to get some sleep.” But if I put God first, then my right to sleep is no longer a right. I’ve given it to God and God has given it back to me as a stewardship trust. Stewards don’t own things. This means that I have a responsibility to do the best I can to take care of my body and get sleep, but if God takes away my sleep after everything I have done within my power to get sleep, I can give it to God and not get angry. It doesn’t belong to me anyway. Rights are self-focused. I’m the one being attacked. Responsibilities are God focused; God is the one being attacked. So you can take responsibilities that are being attacked without getting angry. If you get angry or bitter it is almost always because you are relating to things as rights rather than responsibilities. And initially it takes daily effort to get to the place where we can say with Mephibosheth, I don’t have any rights. I have responsibilities to not take this lying down and to confront sin and to try to restore relationships, but I don’t have rights. I can leave those in God’s hands.

XI. When your motives are questioned (v. 29), reiterate that it is reconciliation that is desired, not a hidden agenda (v. 30)

And when we have that attitude, then it is possible to do what Mephibosheth does in point XI. Look at verses 29-30.

2Sam. 19:29 ¶ So the king said to him, “Why do you speak anymore of your matters? I have said, ‘You and Ziba divide the land.’ ”

2Sam. 19:30 ¶ Then Mephibosheth said to the king, “Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.”

There are differences of view on exactly what is going on in verse 29. But the only explanation that has made any sense to me is the one given by A. W. Pink. He believes that David still doesn’t know who to believe. Both stories seem credible, so he gives a judgment to see what the reactions of both Ziba and Mephibosheth will be. If Ziba is being mercenary, he will perhaps be frustrated that David is going back on his word. And if Mephibosheth is being mercenary, he could either be overly joyful at getting some stuff back or perhaps be negative that Ziba is getting anything. So Pink believes this is a test just like Solomon gave to the two prostitutes to see where their hearts were at. And to David’s surprise, Mephibosheth isn’t interested in the property. He wants the relationship restored. And Pink thinks that a proof that David now believes Mephibosheth and probably restores everything to him, can be seen in David’s protective care of Mephibosheth in chapter 21, when seven descendants of Saul have to be put

to death. And if Pink's explanation is true, then I think this eleventh principle is illustrated: when your motives are questioned (verse 29), reiterate that it is reconciliation that is desired, not a hidden agenda. Too many times reconciliation is clouded by our mixed motives. How much do we really want to be reconciled, and how much of this conflict is simply my pride wanting to get its way? Ultimately, Romans 12 gives these principles because Christians who have been reconciled to God through Christ's sacrifice should be willing live out the same grace of reconciliation with each other – even when we have been wronged. Because after all, God reached out to us when we had 100% wronged Him. If we have been saved by grace we should display our salvation in how we relate to others.

Conclusion

Let me end the sermon with the story of Charlotte Elliott of Brighton, England. She had so many health issues that she could not live the life that she wanted to live. Her disability made her a hardened and very embittered woman. She muttered to herself, "If God loved me, he would not have treated me this way." Hoping to help her, a Swiss minister by the name of Dr. Cesar Malan visited the Elliotts on May 9, 1822. Over dinner, Charlotte lost her temper and railed against God and her family in a violent outburst. Her embarrassed family left the room, and Dr. Malan, left alone with her, stared at her across the table.

"You are tired of yourself, aren't you?" he finally said. "You are holding to your hate and anger because you have nothing else in the world to cling to. Consequently, you have become sour, bitter, and resentful."

"What is your cure?" asked Charlotte.

"The faith you are trying to despise," said Cesar Malan.

And as they talked, Charlotte began to soften. She asked, "If I wanted to become a Christian and to share the peace and joy you possess, what would I do?"

"You would give yourself to God just as you are now, with your fightings and fears, hates and love, pride and shame."

"I would come to God just as I am?" she asked. And when he affirmed yes, that she could not earn that reconciliation but must receive her salvation and all her sanctification from what Jesus had purchased for her, she professed faith and asked God to help her be what she could not be. And God not only saved her, He gave her faith to claim the supernatural and to

attempt the impossible by grace. And God did transform her from hate to love.

Several years later, her brother, the Rev. Henry Elliott, was raising some funds, and Charlotte wrote a poem to help him. The poem was printed and sold across England to raise funds. The leaflet said, “Sold for the Benefit of St. Margaret’s Hall, Brighton: Him That Cometh To Me I Will In No Wise Cast Out.” Underneath was Charlotte’s poem, which has become one of the favorite hymns in history:⁴

1. Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

If we pattern our human reconciliations after God’s reconciliation with us, we will not short-circuit the process by making people earn the right to be reconciled, we will not wait, we will not give up on each other, we will not substitute humanistic ideas for the cleansing grace of Christ, and we will not simply do what feels good or feels possible, but will step into the supernatural and do the impossible – asking God for a forgiving heart that is not natural, asking Him for a love that is supernatural, and believing that what is impossible with man is possible with God.

As I read the whole poem, think of your human reconciliations and measure them against the pattern that God established when He saved us as vile enemies and turned us into friends.

1. Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
2. Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
3. Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,

⁴ Told by Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), pp. 71-72.

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
5. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
6. Just as I am, thy love unknown
hath broken every barrier down;
now, to be thine, yea thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Ask God to live that kind of reconciliation in you and through you. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us... be reconciled...” Amen.