

Psalm 54: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Psalm 54. To the choir master, with stringed instruments, a mascal of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, Is not David hiding among us?

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. For strangers have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life, they do not set God before themselves.

Behold, God is my helper, the Lord is the upholder of my life. He will return the evil to my enemies. In your faithfulness put an end to them. With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you. I will give thanks to your name, O God, for it is good. For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Psalm 54 has the typical features of a psalm of complaint, as Conrad Schaeffer argues. The superscription of the psalm connects it with the events of 1 Samuel 23 19-20, or the similar event of 26 1.

Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeath, saying, Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hekila, which is south of Jashiman? Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.

[1 : 25] Once again David was in a situation of considerable vulnerability, and was betrayed to the one seeking his life. The betrayal of the Ziphites might have been felt more keenly by David, because these were people of his own tribe.

He calls upon God to deliver him from their hands, so that he will have cause once again to thank God for his goodness to him. David calls out to God for deliverance by his name. God's name is his nature and his character, that by which he is identified.

This provides David with assurance of salvation in his situation. Parallel to this petition for salvation by God's name is a petition for God to vindicate him by his might. God's salvation is now presented as a legal act, as a vindication of his servant from false accusation.

God's might, to which David appeals, is that which guarantees that God is able to rescue him from his adversaries. Having expressed the grounds for his confidence for a favourable and effective response from God, he calls upon God to hear his prayer as strangers seek his life.

The seeming description of the Ziphites as strangers or foreigners, presuming that the superscription of the psalm is correct, is surprising. They are David's own tribe's people. Why would he call them foreigners?

[2 : 39] Perhaps the intended sense is that they are behaving like foreigners to him. Like the fool who denies that there is a God, David's adversaries do not set God before themselves.

They conduct themselves as if God did not see or even exist. However, God is the one who will come to David's aid. He is the helper in David's cause and will protect David's life.

He will provide recompense, returning the evil of David's enemies to them, and in his faithfulness bringing judgment upon them. David is able to leave the matter in God's hands, knowing that God upholds his cause and will bring justice in his situation.

[3 : 37]

Storing up in memory past experiences of God's goodness will give us more confidence as we seek his deliverance in the future. A question to consider.

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