

Psalm 54
A Prayer for Godward Justice

Introduction:

Psalm 54 is found in the second book of psalms (42-72), which deals with the reign of the historical David. This is outlined by James Hamilton:

 Psalms 42–49, Sons of Korah

 Psalm 50, Asaph

Psalms 51–72, David

Psalm 54 is found within the third section of the second book, dealing with David being persecuted by Saul.

Superscription: *For the choir director. With stringed instruments. A Maskil of David. When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding himself among us?”* (cf. 1 Sam. 23:19-24; but not 26:1)

The Ziphites lived @ 25 miles south of Jerusalem and were part of David’s own tribe of Judah. David had rescued some of them from the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. 23:1-14).

1) David’s PRAYERS in the face of persecution—54:1-3

a) David’s prayers—54:1-2

i) David’s first prayer—54:1 PLEASE RESCUE ME

(1) Deliver me: ¹ O God, **save** [yasha] me by Your name,

(a) Rooted in God’s self-revelation of His reputation and character.

(b) David was more concerned with God’s reputation than his own (which was currently under attack).

(2) Defend me: *and* **render justice** to me by Your might.

(a) Prove me innocent of the false accusations from the Ziphites.

(b) David is already God’s chosen king. The future of God’s kingdom is dependent on his survival. This is before God’s covenant is made with David in 2 Sam. 7.

ii) David’s second prayer—54:2 PLEASE LISTEN AND RESPOND TO ME

(1) ² O God, **hear** my prayer;

(2) **give ear** to the words of my mouth.

b) The reasons for David’s prayer—54:3 ³ For ...

i) *strangers have risen against me*

ii) *and ruthless* (some MSS read “proud”) *men have sought my life;*

iii) *they have not set God before them. Selah.*

(1) Perhaps referring to Ps. 53:1.

- (2) These are people whose thoughts and actions are not oriented toward the one true God.
- iv) Franz Delitzsch writes: Anyone at that time in Israel who feared God more than man, could not lend himself to be made a tool of Saul's blind fury.

2) David's CONFIDENCE in the face of persecution—54:4-5

- a) David knows who God is—54:4
 - This appears to be the focal point of the psalm
 - i) Statement: ⁴ *Behold, God is my helper;*
 - (1) In contrast to his godless oppressors (cf. 54:3).
 - (2) Same word in Gen. 2:18 for one's wife. What an honor to reflect God's image as a helper.
 - ii) Elaboration: *the Lord/ the Sovereign One [Adonai] is among those who sustain my soul.*
 - (1) James Hamilton writes: However strong and impressive and strategic his enemies may be, they are no match for the world's Maker.
- b) David knows what God will do—54:5
 - i) Prediction: ⁵ *He will return the evil to my foes;*
 - (1) What has been called the boomerang effect of sin.
 - ii) Prayer: **destroy** *them in Your truth/ faithfulness.*
 - (1) This is not a prayer of revenge.
 - (2) God's truth/faithfulness is an attribute of God (God's name).

3) David's GRATITUDE in the face of persecution—54:6-7

- a) **How** David will respond—54:6
 - i) Eagerness: ⁶ *With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to You;*
 - (1) Positive answers to our prayers are steppingstones to greater and deeper devotion. (Alec Motyer)
 - ii) Gratitude: *I will give thanks to Your name (cf. 54:1), O Yahweh, for it is good (cf. 52:9).*
- b) **Why** David will respond in this way—54:7
 - He anticipates God's positive answer to his prayer.
 - i) ⁷ *For He has delivered (synonym to 54:1) me from all distress,*
 - ii) *and my eye has looked (in triumph?) upon my enemies.*
 - (1) David is not gloating over their judgment but rather observing that God's justice is being carried out to the glory of God's name.

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) OT principle: Deut. 32:35; and NT principle: Rom. 12:19