

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
2005

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Psalm 54 — Saved by the Name

1.0 Introducing Psalm 54

- The background for Psalm 54 is described in 1 Samuel 23 and 26.
 - ♦ David had hidden in the desert region of Ziph from King Saul.
 - ♦ Ziph was in the tribal allotment of Judah (David's own tribe) southeast of Hebron.
 - ♦ The Ziphites on two occasions betrayed David to Saul (see wording of the psalm heading and 1 Samuel 23:19 and 26:1).
 - ♦ David was pursued, betrayed, and with very few people whom he could trust.
- Psalm 54 manifests a number of similarities to the surrounding psalms:
 - ♦ "Maskil of David" (Psalms 52, 53, 54, and 55).
 - ♦ Enemies having no regard for God (52:7; 53:1, 4; 54:3).
 - ♦ "Your name" (52:9; 54:1, 6).
 - ♦ "I will give thanks" (52:9; 54:6).
 - ♦ "Selah" (52:3, 5; 54:3).
 - ♦ Additional similarities will be discussed in the study of Psalm 55.

2.0 Reading Psalm 54 (NAU)

54:1 A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"

Save me, O God, by **Your name**,
And vindicate me by Your power.

54:2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.

54:3 For strangers have risen against me

And violent men have sought my life;
They have not set God before them.

Selah.

54:4 Behold, God is my helper;
The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.

54:5 He will recompense the evil to my foes;
Destroy them in Your faithfulness.

54:6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You;
I will give thanks to **Your name, O LORD**, for it is good.

54:7 For He has delivered me from all trouble,
And my eye has looked *with satisfaction* upon my enemies.

For the choir director; on stringed instruments.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 54

3.1 Outline

- I. The Psalmist's Petition (vv. 1-3)—Prayer
- II. The Psalmist's Preservation (vv. 4-7)—Answer



3.2 Notes

- **vv. 1, 6** “Your name”
 - This concept frames the psalm.
 - Three names for God are employed: “God” (vv. 1, 2, 3, and 4), “Lord” (v. 4), and “LORD” (v. 6).
 - “Your name” is normally a reference to the title “LORD” (Yahweh).
 - ✓ Yahweh is the covenant name of God, expressing His relationship to His people.
 - ✓ Yahweh emphasizes God’s power (v. 1), eternity, self-existence, and self-sufficiency.
 - ✓ Yahweh, as a title, meant for the Old Testament saint that God would keep His promises, He would be faithful—He would never abandon them.
- **v. 1** “vindicate me”
 - Literally, “judge me.”
 - David prays that God would act as Judge, to do what is right.
- **v. 3** “They have not set God before them”
 - This is characteristic of the wicked (see Psalm 36:1).
 - It is the opposite characteristic expected of the godly (see Psalm 16:8).
- **v. 5** “Destroy them in Your faithfulness”
 - See Psalm 143:12.
 - Should God’s people ever make such a request of God?
 - It is right for the believer to care about justice and righteousness.

- ✓ Compare “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).
- ✓ “In Your faithfulness” is literally “in Your truth” (see Psalm 25:5).
- David did not take justice into his own hands: he left it to God.
 - ✓ On two occasions David did not take advantage of opportunities to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24 and 26).
- v. 7 “my eye has looked *with satisfaction* upon my enemies”
 - Is it biblical to rejoice over the defeat of enemies?
 - ✓ Rejoicing over answered prayer is not gloating.
 - ✓ Rejoicing over justice and righteousness is the same as rejoicing over the fulfillment of God’s promises.
 - ✓ Compare Psalms 58:10-11; 68:1-3.
 - What is the evidence in the New Testament?
 - ✓ Compare Luke 18:1-8.
 - ✓ Revelation 11:17-18; 18:20; 19:1-6.
 - “It is a bit naive of us to believe in a holy and righteous God who is incompatible with evil and to ask him to enter our world decisively in order to end the effects of evil, and to ignore the fact that such a clean-up would have negative consequences for anyone and everything infected by wickedness.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 803-4.
 - The rejoicing takes the form of praise and thanksgiving (see verse 6).

4.0 Singing Psalm 54



O Save Me by Thy Name (Tune: “A Charge to Keep I Have”)

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|--|---|
| 1 O save me by Thy Name,
And judge me in Thy might,
O God, now grant my urgent claim
Acceptance in Thy sight. | 2 Strong foes against me rise,
Oppressors seek my soul,
Who set not God before their eyes,
Nor own His just control. |
| 3 Lo, God my Helper is,
The Lord, my mighty Friend,
He shall requite my enemies,
Their just destruction send. | 4 My sacrifice of praise
To Thee I freely bring;
My thanks, O Lord, to Thee I raise
And of Thy goodness sing. |
| 5 From troubles and from woes
Thou hast delivered me,
The overthrow of all my foes
Hast given me to see. | |

— Words: Author unknown
Music: Lowell Mason (1832)

5.0 Praying Psalm 54

- Lord, save me from my enemies by your power, not mine. [v. 1]
- Father, hear my prayer. [v. 2]
- Be my helper and my support, O God. [v. 3]
- Thank You for saving me. [v. 6]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 54

- When we feel betrayed, rejected, or abandoned, we need to take our problem to God in prayer.
- God is concerned about those who do not concern themselves with Him.
- God's righteous justice will prevail.

The major stress in the psalm is clearly on the powerful and effective Name of Yahweh. Yahweh may seem absent from the world, but those who invoke his Name with faith and courage will discover the reality of his awesome presence. Those who forget his Name and seek to disregard his will may experience the terrible recoil of their own wickedness, a recoil which is sustained by divine power.

— Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51 – 100*, Word Biblical Commentary
(Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), 49