

"God Is Mine Helper"

Psalm 54

This is another psalm with a very descriptive **superscription** that gives a specific historical account in David's life for which this text was given – "when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?" (**1 Sam. 23:19-20**)

In this historical account, the people of Ziph, even though they were Israelites themselves, **betrayed David's location** to King Saul, who was hunting him. A similar event is recorded in **1 Sam. 26:1**, where the Ziphites again report David's location. Some scholars consider these to be two accounts of the same event but that simply does not fit with the historical record. They are two different times when the Ziphites betrayed David to King Saul.

Psalm 54 most likely was written in response to that **first betrayal** recorded in 1 Sam. 23 when David was hiding in the wilderness of Ziph and **barely escaped** capture by Saul who was called away to fight the Philistines. It was at that point of **danger and betrayal** that David turned to the Lord in faith offering this brief yet **powerful prayer of lament and praise**.

Recorded here is David's **plea for deliverance**, his **confidence in God's justice**, and a **note of praise** for the Lord's faithful help.

I. PLEA FOR HELP – vs. 1-3

A. The "how" – vs. 1-2

1. "Save me, O God, by thy name"

- a) The first thing David pleads for is to be saved from the outcome of the betrayal by the Ziphims

to King Saul. It was **a prayer for real, personal deliverance from a real, personal enemy.**

- b) The deliverance pleaded for is not based on anything he was or had done, but was based **solely on all that God is**, summed up in the phrase, **"by thy name."**

"God's name is the **manifestation of His character**, the sum of His **revealed attributes**. The Psalmist can appeal to it, for [God] has declared that it is **His will to save those** who put their trust in Him." (Cambridge Bible note)

Psalm 5:11

¹¹ But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

2. "Judge me by thy strength"

- a) **"Judge me"** (דִּין) – David isn't asking God to evaluate his case as a judge would do, but to **contend for his cause**. He isn't asking God to determine whether he's guilty or innocent; he's asking God to **act as his advocate and defender**.

This word implies, in this context, that God, as the Righteous Judge, will not merely pronounce a verdict, but **will actively intervene to set things right**.

- b) **"By thy strength"** – considering God is all-powerful, David is simply relying on that strength, that might, to accomplish what needs done.

3. "Hear my prayer...give ear to the words of my mouth" – a common plea by David,

showing, among other things, the value of **verbal, personal communication with God**. Voicing our prayers out loud can strengthen focus and deepen sincerity.

David was most likely alone here, yet he still **voiced his prayers**. Silent prayer is not wrong, and is necessary at times (Neh. 2:4), but I believe God intends to hear our prayers prayed out loud **as if He was in the room with us**.

B. The “why” – vs. 3

1. “For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul”

a) “**Strangers**” = “**oppressors**”

b) “**Risen up against me**” = “**seek after my soul**”

2. “They have not set God before them”

a) To “**set God before**” oneself means **to live in light of His presence**, His **authority**, and His **accountability**.

Psalm 16:8

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

b) Although his enemies were attempting to destroy him and keep him from the throne, David knew they were **ultimately enemies of God** and that was the **root cause** of why they were doing what they were doing.

c) The same is true for us today. **The world hates us because they hate Him.**

John 15:18

¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.

II. PROVISION OF HELP – VS. 4-5

A. Who is providing the help? – God – vs. 4a

1. **"Behold"** (הִנֵּה) – This is an important word, even though it is very common in the Bible. It's a demonstrative particle **used to draw attention**, similar to the expression, "**Hey!**" or "**Look here!**" in English.
 - a) It's use here with **"God is mine helper"** is to draw attention to the contrast between verse 3 and those that opposed David and the fact that they had **"not set God before them"** and the confidence he had in the God he served.
 - b) In the context here, **"Behold"** functions to:
 - (1) **Mark a turning point** – the psalm shifts from petition (vs. 1-3) to confidence (vs. 4-5).
 - (2) **Demonstrate an emotional intensity** – even though our enemies may be numerous, and even though we will face betrayal by friends at times, **"Behold, God is mine helper."**
 - (3) **Emphasize personal experience** – "Whatever others do, I know this: God is mine helper."
 - c) Other places this word is used where it functions in a similar manner:
 - (1) **Genesis 22:13** – shows divine provision

Genesis 22:13

¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and **behold** behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

- (2) **Psalm 121:4** – demonstrates God's constant care

Psalm 121:4

⁴ Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

- (3) **Isaiah 7:14** – introduces something miraculous

Isaiah 7:14

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; **Behold**, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

2. **"God is mine helper"** – simple but profound truth.

Hebrews 13:5-6

⁵ *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

⁶ *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

B. Who is helped? – David and those who helped him – vs. 4b

1. **"My soul"** – David speaking of himself
2. **"The LORD is with them that uphold..."** – I believe this speaks of those that assisted David when he was running from Saul.

David seems to be acknowledging that **God is his ultimate helper**, but He has also graciously provided **human instruments of help and support**, and He stands with all who “uphold” His children.

- a) The word for “**uphold**” (אָהַלֵּךְ) means to lean upon, to support, to hold up, to lay one’s hand on. It often implies **steadying something or someone, bearing weight, or providing strength or stability**.
- b) It’s used **actively**, not passively, carrying the idea of **load-bearing support**, that is, **holding something up that would otherwise fall**.

Psalm 37:17

¹⁷ For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

Psalm 145:14

¹⁴ The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.

2 Kings 18:21

²¹ Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, *even* upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

- c) As **Aaron** and **Hur** physically held up the arms of **Moses**, so to will we need support to live this life that God has called us to.

Exodus 17:12 [different verb but similar usage]

¹² But Moses’ hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur **stayed up** his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady

| until the going down of the sun.

C. What help is being provided? – Justice – vs. 5

1. “He shall reward evil unto mine enemies” – David is referring back to verse 1 and the plea for God to “judge [him] by his strength.” This is the **confident answer he trusted** – that God would provide that **justice** against his enemies.
2. “Cut them off in thy truth”
 - a) The pronoun changes from third person to first person. He’s no longer speaking about God to others; he is directly addressing Him. This is a common Hebrew poetic structure to emphasize the dramatic nature and tone of the text.
 - b) David didn’t ask God to bring an end (“cut them off”) to his enemies “in His wrath,” or “judgment,” or “power,” but **in His “truth.”** He isn’t asking for vengeance; he’s asking for God to **act in faithfulness to His own character.**
 - c) To be “**cut off in God’s truth**” means to be opposed by a God who **cannot lie**, who **cannot fail**, or who **cannot overlook sin and evil.** God’s truth always includes **mercy** to the **humble** and **judgment** to the **wicked.**

| Psalm 89:14

| ¹⁴ Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

III. PRAISE FOR HELP – VS. 6-7

A. The offering of praise – vs. 6a

1. “I will freely sacrifice unto thee”

- a) This is a **voluntary response**, not done out of obligation, but grateful devotion.
 - b) It shows David's confidence that **God will deliver him.**
2. "I will praise thy name, O LORD" – the use of parallelism here shows that the free-will sacrifice mentioned is that of **praise given to the Lord** because of what He **has done**, what He **is doing**, and what He **is going to do**.
 3. **Hebrews 13:15** is a direct New Testament parallel to this text.

Hebrews 13:15

¹⁵ By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

B. The reason for praise – vs. 6b – the goodness of God, seen in "His name"

1. This points back to verse 1 and the reference to the **"name of God,"** which speaks of His **character and faithfulness.**
2. David praises God's name because it is **"good,"** meaning it is **trustworthy, faithful,** and **worthy to be praised.**

C. The reflection of praise – vs. 7

Conclusion: In this brief psalm, we find a message that speaks to every believer who has faced betrayal, opposition, or weariness in the battle. David shows us that when others rise up against us, and they will, we are not left without hope. We can cry out to the Lord for help, putting our trust in His name and resting in His faithfulness.

Even when surrounded by enemies, David anchors his soul in the unchanging character of God. He moves from **pleading** for help, to **professing** his confidence, to **praising** the Lord, all before the deliverance is even complete. This is the pattern of faith: not waiting for the storm to pass before trusting, but offering the sacrifice of praise in the midst of the trial.

Like David, we too are called to trust in the name that is above every name – the name of Jesus Christ – knowing that in Him we are upheld, sustained, and ultimately delivered. And in every circumstance, we can say with David, *"I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good."*