**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

“God My Helper & Upholder of My Life”

A Psalm of David – 54:4

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

August 20th In the Year of Our Lord 2023

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

**Psalm 54**

**1** For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David,

When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, ‎ מַשְׂכִּ֥יל **]**  contemplative poem ]

"Is not David hiding himself among us?"

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

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

**3** For strangers have risen against me

And violent men have sought my life;

They have not set God before them. Selah.

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

**5** He will recompense the evil to my foes;

Destroy them in Your faithfulness.

**6** Willingly I will sacrifice to You;

I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

**7** For He has delivered me from all trouble,

And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.

**1 Samuel 23:19** Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying,

"Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh,

on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?”

**zif (ziph; Ozeib, or Ziph):** https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Jerusalem/275148

****

1. **A town in the hill country of Judah**, south-east of Hebron and mentioned along with Maon, Carmel and Jutah (Josh 15:55). It is chiefly celebrated in connection with the earlier history of David. Here David hid himself from Saul. "David .... remained in the hill-country in the wilderness of Ziph" (1 Sam 23:14,15,24; 26:2); the Ziphites (1 Sam 23:19; 26:1; compare Ps 54 title) sought to betray him to Saul, but David escaped. Ziph was fortified by Rehoboam.

The name of Zif is found about four miles south of Hebron, attached to a rounded hill of some 100 feet in height, which is called Tell Zif. Wikipedia

1. (2 Ch 11:8). The name also occurs in 1 Ch 2:42; 4:16. In connection with this last (compare 4:23) it is noticeable that Ziph is one of the four names occurring on the Hebrew stamped jar handles with the added la-melekh, "to the king."

The site is Tell Zif, 4 miles Southeast of Hebron, conspicuous hill 2,882 ft. above sea-level; there are cisterns and, to the East, some ruins (PEF, III, 312, 315). <https://www.bible-history.com/isbe/z/ziph+%281%29/>

**What is the historical context of Psalm 54?**

Psalm 54 was written by David, reflecting upon his time when he was on-the-run from King Saul. Remember, David wrote 73 Psalms. David was the second of three Kings (Saul, David and Solomon) during the United Monarch period (ca. 1050 BC – 933 BC).

The account of the transition from King Saul to King David is recorded in the book of 1 Samuel 15-16. These Scriptures detail Saul’s rebellion against God and God’s prophet Samuel holding Saul accountable. God then sent Samuel to Jesse’s house to pick another King. The new King would be the young man. . . David.

Because King Saul is rebellious to God, he is tormented with stress and strife and afflicted with mental problems. Due to his internal torments, he directs his staff to find anyone that can play the harp to sooth his spirit. Saul’s staff knew of David. Thus, David was sought-out, brought to Saul and played the harp, soothing Saul’s torments. Of course, Saul did not know that David had been anointed by God’s prophet Samuel to replace him.

It was after David killed Goliath and became known as a more capable military commander that King Saul became jealous of him. We read Scripture detailing Saul’s transition from liking David to looking at him with suspicion in 1 Samuel 18:7-9).

7 The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." 8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

The Psalms David writes highlight the understanding David held about God’s calling on his life. It sounds like a great honor to have God’s prophet (Samuel) come to your family, go through all your older brothers, and then select you as the next King of Israel. There is at least one very challenging reality. There was a built-in conflict from the day David was named to be the next King. The current King of Israel was still living and did not plan to resign. Obviously, this created an estranged relationship between David and King Saul. In addition, all who were loyal to King Saul would not be your best friend.

**1 Samuel 23:13-19**

**13** Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit.

**14** David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of **Ziph**. And **Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.**

**15** Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.

**16** And **Jonathan**, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God.

**17** Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also."

**18** So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

**19** Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? (1 Sam. 23:13-19

Saul tried to enlist his son, Jonathan, to assist in killing David, but Jonathan had made friends with David and warned him of Saul’s plans. When the two met for the last time in the Wilderness of Ziph, they planned that David would be the next king of Israel and Jonathan his minister (1 Samuel 23:16–18). David then went into hiding.

In Psalm 54, we see the importance that David prayed to God to be saved but only by the power of God. . . not by his own power. David does not pray to God to turn him into “Superman” so that he can miraculously defeat Saul. First, David acknowledged the name of God (v. 1), and he petitions vindication by His/God’s power. David further petitions God to hear his prayer (v.2). This is a direct reflection upon Jesus’ model prayer in Matthew 5:6. . . We call Jesus’ prayer ‘The Lord’s Prayer’.

. . . Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored,

**Biblical citations of events chronicling David’s Kingship**

**From the Biblical Hermeneutics online site “Stack Exchange”.**

It is true that David was anointed king over all Israel at the age of 30. BUT he did not reign over all Israel until the the king of non-Judah, Ish-bosheth, had been removed. The sequence of events was as follows:

* Saul died (1 Sam 31)
* Ish-bosheth was anointed king over "all Israel", 2 Sam 2:9
* Almost simultaneously, David is anointed king over Israel, 2 Sam 2, 4, 5:4, 5, but in reality, David only reigned over Judah
* A civil war ensured, 2 Sam 2:12 - 2 Sam 4:12
* Finally, Is-bosheth was murdered, 2 Sam 4:1-8
* This left David free to begin his reign over all Israel, 7½ years later at the age of 37, 2 Sam 5:4, 5.
* David moves his capitol from Hebron to Jerusalem after conquering Jerusalem, 2 Sam 5:6-11

In fact, the (arguably) premature anointing of David as king over "all Israel" was merely a repetition and recognition of David's earlier anointing as the heir apparent by the prophet Samuel under God's direction as recorded in 1 Sam 16:1-13, and God's rejection of the king Saul and his subsequent dynasty in 1 Sam 15.

<https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/66231/at-what-age-did-david-really-become-king-of-judah-and-or-israel>

**Now, let us look in detail at Psalm 54.**

**We have already reviewed verse 1 and 2.**

**1** For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David,

"Is not David hiding himself among us?"

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

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

**In verse 3**, David identifies his enemies and also highlights their rebellion to God by writing that they do not set God before them. Notice the word “Selah” punctuates David’s observation. “Selah” is believed to be a word giving direction to raise the singers voice to a higher pitch. Some think the word “Selah” could mean to pause or indicate other musical instructions.

**3** For strangers have risen against me

And violent men have sought my life;

They have not set God before them. Selah.

**In verse 4**, we see David not only identifies God as his helper but is the one who sustains his life. This is of great importance for us to understand what David is communicating. Many English translations use the word “soul” which could have an application to David’s salvation. The Hebrew word “*nephesh*” is applied to a temporal life. Therefore, David knows and relies upon God to keep his physical life alive. Like the ESV rendering…

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

ESV Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

**In verse 5**, once again, I like the ESV rendering to be the more direct translation. David prays that God will “return” the evil his enemies have planned for him “back” on them. And that God is “faithful and true” to achieve the protection and judgement.

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

ESV He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them.

**Verse 6** declares David’s sacrifice that gives thanks to the Lord and, in particular, emphasizing His name “Yehovah”. This *saving* function of God can be seen in the name Joshua, who was Moses’s successor who led the Hebrew people into the Promised Land. We also see that David believes God’s name is good. We have all heard that names and words mean things. The meaning of a word only has power if the source named actually accomplishes events of substance. . . like saving lives and defeating evil enemies.

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

יְהֹוָה Yehovah {yeh-ho-vaw'} Strong’s 03068

**Meaning:** Jehovah = "the existing One" [Exodus 3:14] 1) the proper name of the one true God. Psalm. 20:6 Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand. See Also: Psalm 34:18, 37:40

Joshua יְהוֹשׁוּעַ Yehoshua or יְהוֹשֻׁעַ Yehoshua Strong’s 03091

Meaning: 'the LORD is salvation,' Moses’ successor, also the name of a number of Israel. Origin: from 3068 and 3467

David’s number one concern is to be delivered from his enemies. Meaning that his physical life is preserved and he lives to fight another day.

**7** For He has delivered me from all trouble,

And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.

I see that we all have the same goals as David. We want to live; I mean preserve our physical bodies in order to continue living our temporal lives. Now these events happened in the prime of David’s life when he was still a young man and he anticipated fulfilling God’s anointing that one day he would be King of Israel.

It is worthy to point-out that David did become King of Israel but not due to his maneuvering or hand. Scripture tells us that Saul’s life ended when he was defeated in battle by the Philistines. Saul then fled and did not want to be taken alive so he fell on his own sword (1 Samuel 31). So, true to David’s prayer, God delivered him from the hands of his enemies.

**Application to Our Lives**

We have many concerns in our lives. Children are challenged to make good grades and be successful in sports. Young adults are striving to figure-out becoming an adult. Parents are striving to make ends meet in the midst of being father and mother. Grandparents are seeking to assist where that are welcome and can provide assistance in this chaotic world of mixed messages.

**Key elements to the message Psalm 54 delivers.**

1. It is of utmost importance to recognize that David had a relationship with God to begin with. David’s prayer to God was not a long-distance call (Prov. 15:28-29).

**28** The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. **29** The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

1. Due to David’s faith in God, he had an expectation that in the end, things would work-out. 1 Peter 3:12 from Psalm 34:15.

**12** "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND

TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

1. David did not have all the answers. In fact, other than praying to God, he had none.

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will,

He hears us (1 John 5:14).

1. God did deal with David’s enemies, but more importantly for us to see is that David’s enemies were first and foremost enemies of God and He had a plan to judge them.

**16:1** The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

**2** All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives. **3** Commit

your works to the LORD And your plans will be established. **4** The LORD has made everything

for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:1-4).

1. David’s prayer to God and relationship with Him are a great witness to others. Therefore, we need to be aware that others see us in how we live our lives.

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good

works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”.

**AMEN**