

## Psalm 54

**Title:** Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

**Author and Date:** David

**Key Verses:** Psalm 54:3, 5, 7

**Type:** Individual Lament (Complaint)

### **Outline**

- A. Trouble: prayer for deliverance (verses 1-3).
- B. Trust: profession of dependence (verses 4-5).
- C. Triumph: promise of devotion (verses 6-7).

### **Notes**

Title: “For the Chief Musician: on stringed instruments. Maschil of David; when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, ‘Doth not David hide himself with us?’” For the meaning of “the Chief Musician” and “stringed instruments” (“on Neginoth”, KJV), see the notes on the title of Psalm 4, 6, 54, 55, 67, and 76. For “stringed instruments”, see Psalm 45:8; 150:4; Isaiah 38:20; and Habakkuk 3:19. For “Maschil of David”, see the notes on Psalm 32. “Maschil” is found in the heading of 13 psalms: 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, and 142. The reference to the Ziphites telling Saul about David’s hiding place is found in 1 Samuel 23:14-15, 19-24, and 26:1-4. Twice the Ziphites betrayed David’s whereabouts to Saul. Ziph is a small town 15 miles SE of Hebron in the Judean hill country (Josh. 15:24). Other psalms composed by David while he was in flight from Saul are: Psalm 18, 34, 52, 56, 57, 59, 63, and 142. See the notes on the title of Psalm 52.

Summary: Psalm 54 is similar to Psalm 35. In both psalms, the psalmist prays to God for help. In Psalm 54, the psalmist is in trouble (verse 7) and prays to God for help (verses 1, 2, and 4) from his enemies (verse 3). He wants his enemies to be judged and destroyed by God (verses 5 and 7). In return for God’s help, the psalmist makes promises to sacrifice free-will offerings and to give thanks to the Lord (verse 6). This psalm, along with the next few psalms (Psalm 54-59), are designed to encourage the faithful when they are faced with troubles and enemies.

Verse 1: Note the Hebrew parallelism. “Save me” is parallel to “judge me”, and “by thy name” is parallel to “by thy strength” (KJV). The saving and judging that the psalmist requests concerns his deliverance from his enemies. He wants God to “vindicate” (RSV) him. God’s “name” refers to the totality of his divine attributes, his total being. God’s “name” (see also verse 6) is all that God is and stands for, the total person of God that is revealed to man.

Verse 3: The Ziphites were acting like “strangers” (KJV) instead of fellow-Israelites. Saul and his men were acting like “oppressors” (KJV). The evil and wicked enemies of the psalmist do not “set God before them” (KJV). They do not fear God, believe God, or obey God. They have no regard for God’s will or his judgment against them. Their actions are not governed by what God wants them to do. See Psalm 10:5, 11; 36:1; 55:20; and 86:14. For “Selah,” see the notes on Psalm 3:2.

Verse 4: The psalmist moves from *trouble* in verses 1-3, to *trust* in verse 4, to *triumph* in verses 5-7. The trouble-to-trust-to-triumph motif is very common in the psalms. The “Behold” at the beginning of this verse brings attention to God’s help. Note how God helps, by upholding the soul of man.

Verse 5: The psalmist is not looking to settle a score with his enemies. He does not have a personal vendetta against them, nor does he want to return evil for evil. He wants God to vindicate him and “reward evil ... in thy truth” (KJV). God’s “truth” is the basis for his requiting and destroying the enemies. God knows who is guilty and who is innocent and he executes justice accordingly. Those who are right are vindicated and those who are wrong are punished. The destroyers (verse 3) will be destroyed (verse 5).

Verse 6: The psalmist’s sacrifice was not a required offering, but a voluntary, free-will offering that came from his love and gratitude toward God (Num. 15:3). Note the three different descriptions for God in this psalm: “God” (Heb. *elohim* = mighty one) and “Lord” (Heb. *adonai* = ruling one) in verse 4, and “Jehovah” (see ASV; Heb. *Yahweh* = eternal one) in verse 6.

Verse 7: The psalmist’s “desire” (KJV) was not personal vindictiveness, but divine vindication. He sees what God does to his enemies (Psa. 59:10; 92:11; 118:7).

## **Questions**

1. What two requests does the psalmist have for God (verse 1)?
2. What does the psalmist want God to hear (verse 2)?
3. Who are raised up against the psalmist and who seek his soul (verse 3)?
4. How are the psalmist’s enemies described with reference to God (verse 3)?
5. What is God to the psalmist (verse 4)?
6. What does the psalmist believe God will do to his enemies (verse 5)?

7. What does the psalmist promise to do for God and why (verse 6)?

8. What does the Lord do for the psalmist (verse 7)?

### **Applications for Today**

1. The faithful go to God in prayer in times of trouble (verses 1-2). What did the early church do when they were persecuted (Acts 4:24; 12:5)?

2. Men who work evil and wickedness do not “set God before them” – they do not fear God, believe him, or obey him (verse 3). Who does the world not know (Jn. 15:21; 16:3; 17:25)?

3. God hears (verse 2) and God helps (verse 4). He helps by upholding the soul of man (verse 4). What did Paul get from God (Acts 26:22)? What do Christians say (Heb. 13:6)?

4. Let God take care of the evil-doers (verse 5). What are we supposed to do and not do with evil-doers and enemies (Mt. 5:43-48; Lk. 6:27, 35; Rom. 12:17-21; 13:1ff)?

5. God’s truth will vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked (verse 5). What does God do with the righteous and the wicked (Mt. 13:49; 2 Pet. 2:7-9; Rev. 18:4-6)?

6. Free-will offerings given to God come from a heart that is thankful (verse 6). What did the Israelites bring to the tabernacle (Ex. 35:29) and to the temple (Ezra 3:5; 7:16)? What do Christians give (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7)?

7. The Lord delivers his people out of trouble (verse 7). What promise is given to the righteous and the faithful (Psa. 32:7; 34:17; 50:15; 81:7; 91:15; 107:6; Prov. 11:8)?