

# 6/27/21 - Psalm 54 - "Worshipping in the Dark"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we are at awe and complete reverence over the miraculous fact that we have this special revelation from you.

As you have communicated throughout the ages to your people. If only we weren't so block-headed and would just listen to you.

And trust you. And trust in your words. We don't need gimmicks. We don't need all the tricks and ways of getting people to come to you.

All we need is your word and your word alone. It is sufficient. It is full authority over our lives. And very relevant into all the ages transcendent in its ways.

And so, Father, we pray that at this time we don't just look at a distant reality. A song of David as if it's a distant reality. And we don't intend to look at the Psalms in a superficial manner.

[ 0 : 58 ] But to dig deep within the heart of the situations and circumstances which drove the author to write. So, Father, help us to see your glory over the next several weeks in this book called Psalms.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen, folks. The psalm today is in Psalm 54.

And this sermon title is titled, Worshipping in the Dark. Today we're diving into Psalm 54. You might ask why.

I don't really have some crazy spiritual answer for you. Just because I said so. We're just going to start in Psalm 54. Psalm 54 is also part of a larger section.

A larger chunk of a series of psalms. Psalm 54 is blocked together between Psalm 54 all the way to Psalm 60. And within these seven psalms are the same recurring theme.

[ 2 : 11 ] So, these consist of seven psalms regarding the situations in David's life that were troubling. That were turning him to God in triumph.

And this particular Psalm 54 is pertaining to David's betrayal from the Ziphites. And so, David is betrayed.

He's abandoned by his own people. And so, he's turning to God in triumph. Within the seven psalms, 54 all the way to 60, you have those same reoccurring themes.

And so, I'm going to take the first of that series. And then next week we'll jump into later on in Psalm 62. And so, we need to kind of understand where we're at in David's life right now.

These are David's pre-monarchical days. Basically to say that Saul is the man. Saul is the man in charge.

[ 3 : 10 ] He is the reigning king. And he is the king that God did not intend. The people demanded this man.

And so, David wrote the psalm after being betrayed by the Ziphites in Ziph, a town in the hill country belonging to Judah's tribe, southeast of Hebron.

And this psalm can be divided specifically into three stanzas. And for the sake of expository preaching and the ease of sermon flow, we will preserve that structure within the structure of the sermon today.

In many words, I'm saying it's a three-point sermon. We got three stanzas in the Psalm 54. We're going to have a three-point sermon. And its structure, I believe, can be felt.

And I want us to feel that structure that we read today. Especially by the end of the third verse. And here we will find a *selah* after the third verse.

[ 4 : 15 ] A *selah*. This means a long pause. A time of reflection. After David pleads with God. And following this *selah*, the rest of the song contains David laying aside doubt while singing in joyful triumph.

And we will discuss the significance of this. Spurgeon says that the vigor of faith is the death of anxiety and the birth of security. And we will certainly observe that today in this psalm in particular. It was during this dark time of betrayal. Of abandonment. Of anxiety. Of fear.

That David was considered a traitor to a madman named Saul. Saul is out for blood. And David is at a dead end, essentially, with no one he can trust.

And before we jump into David's psalm in Psalm 54, why don't we just drop into where David is.

[ 5 : 26 ] At ground zero of the instance and circumstance that left David in this emotional devastation and praying for God to vindicate him. Let's first look at, it'll be up on the screen, but if you want to turn with me, go to 1 Samuel 23, starting in verse 15.

Again, it'll be on the screen. But we'll be jumping into the context and then right into the psalm.

Verse 15 says, David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life.

David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God.

And he said to him, Do not fear, for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you.

Saul, my father, knows this. And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home. Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hekilah, which is south of Jashemun?

[ 6 : 54 ] Now, come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down. And our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hands.

And verse 24 concludes, And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Church, it was at this moment, sometime within this time period, of complete betrayal from David's own people, who ought to have his back, that David wrote this psalm in Psalm 54, which reads, O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

O God, hear my prayer. Give ear to the words of my mouth, for strangers have risen against me.

Ruthless men seek my life.

They do not set God before themselves. Selah. Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life.

He will return the evil to my enemies. In your faithfulness, put an end to them. With a free will offering, I will sacrifice to you. I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.

[ 8 : 21 ] For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies. This is the word of the Lord.

This is a psalm of prayer, of praise for the power of God, which sustains and delivers God's people from all opposition.

So let's dive in today. The first point, we'll be looking at verse 1 through 3, which is turn from sin before turning to God.

Verse 1 reads, O God, O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might. O God, hear my prayer. Give ear to the words of my mouth, for strangers have risen against me.

Ruthless men seek my life. They do not set God before themselves. Selah. Church, these were extremely dark days.

[ 9 : 30 ] These were extremely dark days. And it's one thing to talk about the dark days. Oh yeah, that must have been difficult. But David's strong. We don't want to minimize and just cast these days aside.

Because it's different than talking about it, than actually being in the darkness. And so here you have a man who is fleeing from a maniac named Saul.

Saul is the king that the people demanded. God, give us a king. Here's a man. Raise him up. Here's the king we want. And God allows it to happen so that they can learn a lesson.

And they're learning it right now. This is not the king that God had in mind. It was just earlier from this moment in this dark time period that Doeg informed Saul of David's whereabouts.

And that was at Nob. And it was also at Nob that David barely escaped Saul. And if you can recall this very dark, arguably one of the most dark periods recorded in the book of 1 Samuel.

[ 10 : 43 ] If you can recall, at this point, 85 priests were massacred because they would not turn David over to Saul. This maniac had 85 priests slaughtered.

Truly a maniac. This is brutal. This is serious. This is not just, oh yeah, David made it through.

This is troubling times. Could you imagine finding out that you are partially responsible for the death of 85 priests? Having that on your conscience.

That because they wouldn't sell you out to King Saul, that they gave their life for that. As David confessed to Avitar in 1 Samuel 22, 22.

That day when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul. And David says, I am responsible responsible for the death of your father's whole family.

[ 11 : 43 ] How about that sleeping at night on your conscience? Dark, church. Very dark. And even as David gets a victory against the Philistines, just earlier in this chapter at Calah, Saul was onto his path yet again.

David has a victory and helps secure the Philistines, helps secure his own people's borders from the Philistines and Calah. And yet again, Saul is still after him.

Even in the remote areas of the country, belonging to the Israelites, Saul was a man to be feared and God's people sold David out time and time again.

It's this theme that we just read in 1 Samuel. Is not David hiding among us? King Saul. This is the theme and David has nowhere to turn.

He is unsafe even in the wilderness. And there's anyone that he can hardly trust. Surprisingly, even his own people. And so David turns not to himself.

[ 12 : 54 ] He doesn't turn to an army to seek revenge. He doesn't seek persuasive words to try to convince people to come on his side.

He turns to God. Notice the structure and the substance of his opening words. Look with me in Psalm 54. It said, By your name, save me by your name and vindicate me by your might.

The basis of David's trust is in God's name. And this is culturally significant. You know, when we're choosing baby names, we kind of like forecast the future. I want something that says, man of God, strong and mighty and that will carry out the days of his life.

Right? We want to choose the right name. But we can sometimes miss the cultural significance of this because back in these days, this was very significant.

It wasn't just a little hope or a little whim. God is, David is calling upon who God is based on his name. And this is alluding to his covenant protection over his people, the nation of Israel.

[ 14 : 18 ] And he continues, give ear to my words, to the words of my mouth. David being a man after God's own heart is pleading to God to give ear to his own heart.

In verse 3, he lays out for God the deadly circumstances. As God already knew David's troubling predicament, David explains thoroughly the situation.

For strangers have risen against me. Ruthless men seek my life. They do not set God before themselves. Church, this is a time of a threefold reflection within these three verses when David is at a dead end.

This reflection at the dead end focuses on who God is. He is David's Savior. It is also claiming the relationship that he has with God.

Give ear to my words. Just like we look to our neighbor sometimes and husbands and wife, do you hear me? Often we don't. But he's giving that personal relationship with God that is with him, protecting him.

[ 15 : 40 ] He's saying, give ear to my words in that relational way. And contrasting it to his deadly circumstances.

God, you are mightier the Savior. Give ear to my words. This is my situation. And church, after three verses, David enters into a time of worshipful reflection.

After laying all that out, we enter into David's worship service as Selah forces us to pause with David.

Selah. And at this moment, to allow the reality of truth, of who God is, our relationship with him, and the situation that David is facing, to allow us to pause and let that sit for a moment.

and allow the Lord to govern our thought life. In other words, David is pleading with God, if I have anything to do with this situation, make it known to me.

[ 16 : 46 ] Situation after situation after situation, David is looking upon the mirror. Do our prayers echo this same disposition? Do we really think that God ignores our unconfessed sin?

And just miraculously hears us and grants our prayers and our petitions? Just as any faithful grandfather grants that their grandkids with that chocolate bar you know the parents are going to be upset with, right?

We're acting like God is our vending machine. We just put the coin in and we expect to get something from him. It doesn't matter the condition of our lives or the sin that we have. We know this about God and David knew this very well. He even wrote it in Psalm 66, 18. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, David says, the Lord would have not listened. David was a man who took Psalm 139 very seriously. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

[18:03] As Christians, the gospel brings us hope that when we provide God a reason for him to discipline us, it is through our continuous confession by the blood of Jesus Christ that we are forgiven time and time and time and time and time and time again.

In fact, God has sent his Holy Spirit to dwell within us to convict us to the point of bringing us to confession and repentance. It's a haunting reality if you know what I'm talking about. And our prayers are brought to God by way of the Holy Spirit. We have been, our sin has been atoned by Christ. If David had such reverence for God, how could we ever remain complacent and assume that God hears our prayers?

Right? You see, David's life was on the line, literally speaking. Dark days. And with nowhere to turn, he turned to God, pleading for God to help and hear.

And so we too can remember with great hope that there is always a way for God at our perceived dead end. if only we revered God like David did.

[19:27] Now, being that David continues from this moment of Selah, pausing on the truth of God, his relationship with him, and maybe that broken relationship with him, and then laying out the situation that he was facing, we know that after this moment of Selah, we don't know how long this time of reflection lasted.

This could have been hours of him focusing on verse 1 through 3. We don't know. But he continues, and he continues to prayer and praise.

Let's see what changes in David's disposition. Let's see what changes in David's situation. The second point is that protection and retribution lay in the hands of God.

And we see that in verse 4 through 5. It says, Behold, God is my helper. Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life.

He will return the evil to my enemies. In your faithfulness, put an end to them. And as David continues in communion with God during this severely dark time in the wilderness of his own people's country, David recalls the historical record of God's help in his life.

[20:56] Here, David is able to survey his own life of the many instances of God's miraculous intervention where God upheld his life and preserved him.

And we see, I kind of saw these two verses with the hands of God intact in verse 4 and 5. We see that, you know, Behold, God is my helper.

He's the upholder of my life. And just like any protective father, he will return with the other hand. He's protecting me here.

He will return with the other hand. He will crush my enemies just as any protective father would for their child. And we know that this is who God was. This is how God responded in David's life.

We recall back in 1 Samuel 17 the defeat of the mighty Philistine, Goliath, of God's victory over Goliath through David.

[21:52] And we understand that even just as we mentioned the border of his own people, the citizens of Calah. And he helped bring that victory to his own people.

David was well acquainted with the retribution that remained in God's hands all the time and that protection. You ever think about for a moment how sometimes illustrations and sermons are going to be very confusing in about 100 years?

Because I saw in this, if you've ever heard of the app called TimeHop, essentially David is taking a moment to hop on his TimeHop. And he's going on an app, which isn't going to make sense if this is even circulated in 100 years.

I don't know what, I don't think we're going to be here in 100 years. But anyhow, as he's going through a TimeHop, God is saying to David, look upon the times that I have cared for you.

And David is looking upon those instances. He's looking, he's scrolling through that feed. And it's bringing him encouragement. David is well acquainted with that retribution remaining in God's hands all that time.

[ 23 : 04 ] But church, how many times do we forget this? Right? In our trouble, how many times do we immediately sort of sink in defeat?

All shrugged over rather than rising in God's victory. Why are we so quick to defeat and even vengeance? Right?

Well, the fall has a lot to do with it. Why we sink in defeat and why we're quick to vengeance. But also, the Imago Dei, just having the image of God and having that ingrained within our nature. We want vengeance. We want justice. These are great things that are ingrained within the image of God. But David's attitude is worthy of mention here in verse 4 and 5.

Immediately after describing the situation he faces in verse 3, David doesn't fall to the trap of, woe is me, another situation, God.

[ 24 : 05 ] When is this ever going to end? Am I ever going to be safe? Is anybody ever going to be my friend and have my back? Instead, he turns to behold the glory and faithfulness of God.

He claims what is true. And friends, when we are quick to wallow, we must engage our mind and heart often.

It's known as ministering to ourselves, preaching to ourselves. The mighty fortress is our God.

Sometimes life can be so dark.

So dark. And sometimes it can be a mixture of all these small little stresses in life that accumulate in our lives and then all of a sudden we're just lost in depression over a bunch of little things or it could just come like a tidal wave and God's just like, here you go, time for sanctification, right?

Sometimes life can be so dark and in our despair we may find it challenging to search through our time hops.

[ 25 : 21 ] You know what I mean? To sort through any past victory that has happened in our lives. But friends, we must never forget the victory of the cross.

when the sorrows of our life hit, we look upon the eyes of the man of sorrows who hung upon a cross.

Look into his eyes. Whose body was broken, who stopped breathing for you.

the price of your redemption in Jesus Christ. When despair hits, we can often be unaware of God's faithfulness in our lives yesterday because we are so clouded in the struggle of today.

But we must never forget the power of gazing upon that blood-stained cross that occurred 2,000 years ago. Church, God is faithful to you regardless if you feel it or not.

[ 26 : 36 ] He is faithful to you. We rest upon the word of God within our lives and the demonstration of that love that's recorded within the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In this faith, we are able to stand in our despair. We're able to put our swords down in vengeance and trust God to bring about the retribution if he wills.

You think you know the best way of providing justice? We're not God. And David understood that. Even the fact that in David's life in 1 Samuel 24 and 26, David had every opportunity to end Saul's life.

I'm talking like this is prime. This is like J.L. and Cicero and judges. He was totally, his guard was down and David had a weapon. He could have taken care of his problem but he stopped.

And grace was experienced through David's life and he spared Saul's life and tried to talk it out with them. David understood that retribution rested in the hands of God but do we?

[ 27 : 54 ] In this we can be encouraged that before we consider making war with other people even when the opportunity presents itself it's not God giving you a way of providing retribution.

We have to make war with our flesh before we make war with other people. To preach in the mirror the truths of God yesterday and respond accordingly and trust in his timing today which leads us into the last point in the last few verses in verse six and seven that God honors a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

In verse six it reads with a free will offering I will sacrifice to you. I will give thanks to your name O Lord for it is good for he has delivered me from every trouble and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies and just interestingly enough look at the tense of many of these verses he has delivered me from every trouble verse seven says and my eye has looked in triumph of my enemies David offers a sacrifice here in verse six a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God notice that this is a sacrifice isn't that a little strange right a sacrifice we can kind of skim over that and just be into our last song today but we really need to understand this because it is significant this is a sacrifice in

David's life of thanksgiving meaning that there is a transactional situation occurring it's unfolding in the life of David at this moment and we're entering into that you see the direction the direction of this sacrifice is not boasting in his own efforts that God I'm humbling myself before you I'm going to church every day and I'm praising you I'm not doubting you or anything like that it wasn't boasting in his own efforts of performance in his own self-evaluation he's not a quote holy roller if we take a cultural term but the basis of this sacrifice was an offering to God being his thanksgiving that's odd right this is important to note because David is not simply bribing God here saying that I'm bringing you this offering now you hold up to your end of the bargain and save me no church

I want you to hear this this morning it's not that type of transactional situation that is unbiblical this sacrifice is a sacrifice to David because it is an offering to God regardless if he makes it out of hiding that regardless if he if the outcome is as he desires regardless if retribution is ever served this is a sacrifice of thanksgiving that I'm going to praise your name regardless the sacrifice rests in that he is sacrificing his doubts his anxiety his fear and in turn offering thanksgiving this is huge church absolutely huge and while David's prayer did not begin with very much confidence we see some disconnect there possibly it took a sailor pause in order for him to properly align himself to the truth of God's word regardless of his situation or his outcome friends this is

[ 32 : 04 ] God's word for us can't we learn a thing or two from David here Spurgeon did Spurgeon said let us trust that if we are as friendless as this man of God we may resort to prayer as he did exercise the like faith and find us ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise may we too sing a new song of old a new song of old a song of God's might and salvation a song of God's reception of our prayers a song of God's timely retribution a song of God's help and sustaining power a song of faithful deliverance in our situations and a song of God's last word over our circumstance whether it's in our favor or our enemies to God be the glory it's a song that even if we don't make it out of the darkness alive all praise glory and honor goes to

God's name amen this is clearly a psalm for anyone who feels abandoned who feels rejected who feels betrayed so as we close I'd like to ponder a few of these because have you ever felt betrayed or abandoned neglected from your husband or your wife maybe it's very common to you because you have people in your life that are referred to ex-husband or ex-wife you ever felt abandoned or betrayed by your own children that won't listen to you siblings do you ever feel betrayed and neglected by your mother or your father have you ever been publicly denounced or perceived as evil and slandered by close friends have you ever felt like no one is on your side that no one cares for you heck maybe you're in here right now and you're wondering if even

God has neglected you right it is a psalm like this that helps us understand that God is mighty to save David provides a model attitude to someone who pays attention to the Selah moments in their life in order to reflect upon who God is and what God has done this drives our worship in fact church this is the basis of worship you ask us why we worship it's because of who God is and what he has done this is what David is doing so we can be encouraged that even in the darkest moments in this life whether the doctor gives you a diagnosis that gives you a couple years to live you can praise him that even if even if there's an immediate threat of persecution your life is on the line just as David's was or if you're experiencing a family member who is facing immediate death or despair or possibly persecution themselves a psalm like this reminds us that we can always find strength to worship in the dark so I invite you church to worship in the dark in your suffering in your pain in your sorrow in your uncertainty because God is with you and he is covenantally faithful to his people as he always has been and the light of Calvary will always breach the darkness of this life it will always breach the light and the darkness of this life if only we might turn our heads from despair and rise to victory you aren't the only one who experiences darkness and betrayal church come on he suffered alone he was despised he was rejected he suffered alone surrounded by darkness there were there was no light to be had and the moment darkness thought it won he rose from the grave and a light breaks forth and that light broke forth and is still piercing our darkness today even then the father did hear

Jesus the father did help Jesus and the father did save Jesus and even as he heard and helped and saved David time and time again let us be confident that Jesus Christ will also hear help and save you and guess what even if he doesn't save you praise God because you know where your home is and maybe you're not in Jesus Christ I'm just going to answer the question for you Jesus is calling you to faith today Jesus is calling you today to trust in him to put your faith in him so come and give your life to Jesus Christ take that step in faith and you got a whole community a new family

that you will be grafted into to walk along the way and what a quite interesting family you got here right come after the service today if you feel like you want to give your life to Jesus [ 38 : 37 ] Christ and I will walk you through a confession I will walk you into a community to come alongside of you if you are in a season of darkness and death maybe today I encourage you to gaze forward and wait for your resurrection and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving regardless of the approaching outcome it is by the power that we lower ourselves and it's by the power of God alone that he raises us up this is truth church let's trust in Christ together this is what it means to worship in the dark let's pray