

PSALM 54

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 54

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, [A Psalm] of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

Of the word “neginoth”, (see Gill on “^{<3901>}Psalm 4:1”), title; and of “maschil”, (see Gill on “^{<3901>}Psalm 32:1”), title. The occasion of writing this psalm were the discoveries the Ziphims or Ziphites made to Saul of David being in their neighbourhood; which they did twice, as appears from (^{<0234>}1 Samuel 23:14,19 26:1). Which of these gave occasion to the psalm is not certain; it is very likely that it was composed after both had been made. These Ziphims were the inhabitants of a city called Ziph, which was in the tribe of Judah, (^{<0155>}Joshua 15:55), near to which was a wilderness, which had its name from the city in which David was when they came to Saul with this news of him.

Ver. 1. *Save me, O God, by thy name*, etc.] That is, by himself, by his power, and of his grace and goodness; the Lord’s name is often used for himself. David in his distress applies to his God for salvation and deliverance, who only could give it; which was right; and his prayer was remarkably heard and answered: for when Saul came down upon the first discovery, and beset David and his men all around, just as he was about to seize the prey, tidings came to him of the invasion of the Philistines; which obliged him directly to quit his pursuit of David, and return in haste for the defence of his country, (^{<0226>}1 Samuel 23:26-28); and upon the second discovery, when Saul came again to take him, Saul was delivered into the hands of David, who could have took away his life if he would; but he only took his spear and cruse of water by his bolster, as a proof of his being in his power, (^{<0212>}1 Samuel 26:12). Of such avail is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. This prayer is suitable enough to David’s antitype and son, the Messiah; (see ^{<0601>}Psalm 69:1 ^{<3877>}Hebrews 5:7); and especially to sensible sinners; who, being made acquainted with, their lost and perishing condition, inquire the way of salvation; and finding it is not by works, but by Christ alone, apply in that way for it, and desire that God would save them by his Son; who is his name, in whom his name is, and

whose name Jesus, a Saviour, is of God's giving; and this name is a strong tower, whither such souls, sensible of danger, flee and are safe; nor is there any other name in which salvation is, and which is therefore exceeding precious, and like ointment poured forth; (see ^{<0231>}Exodus 23:21 ^{<0121>}Matthew 1:21 ^{<0810>}Proverbs 18:10 ^{<4012>}Acts 4:12 ^{<2108>}Song of Solomon 1:3). Or, "for thy name's sake"^{f708}; for the sake of the glory of his divine perfections; which was displayed in the deliverance of David, and more abundantly in the salvation of lost sinners; such as the wisdom, power, faithfulness, justice, grace and mercy of God. Such a petition shows that man cannot save himself; that no creature, none but God can save him; and that a sensible sinner desires to be saved in such a way that God may be glorified;

and judge me by thy strength; David, though innocent, had many charges laid against him; his enemies were lively and strong; he puts his cause into the hands of the Lord, his strong Redeemer, who was able to plead it thoroughly against those that strove with him; so Christ, his antitype, committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously, (^{<0123>}1 Peter 2:23); and so should every believer.

Ver. 2. *Hear my prayer, O God*, etc.] The psalmist first puts up his petitions, and then desires to be heard; his distress, and the fervency of his spirit, not suffering him to observe order;

give ear to the words of my mouth; for the prayer which was conceived in his mind, and inwrought there by the Spirit of God, was expressed vocally.

Ver. 3. *For strangers are risen up against me*, etc.] Meaning such as Doeg the Edomite, or Heathen soldiers, that Saul had hired and took into his army, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; and such as these rose up against David's antitype, the Messiah, (^{<0811>}Psalm 2:1,2) (^{<4027>}Acts 4:27). Or rather the Ziphims, who were of his own nation, yea, of his own tribe, yet used him as barbarously as the very Heathens would have done, or worse; and who, though notwithstanding they were of Israel, might not be Israelites indeed, but strangers to an inward experience of divine and spiritual things: for men may be professors of religion, and yet be strangers to God in Christ, to Christ himself, and the way of salvation by him, and communion with him; to the Spirit of God, and the operations of his grace on the heart; to themselves, their own hearts, and their state and condition by nature; to the Gospel of Christ, and to the people of God; and these are sometimes the most violent persecutors of good and spiritual men;

and oppressors seek after my soul; or “life”^{f709}, to take it away; as did Saul and his army; who are “the mighty” or “strong ones”^{f710}, as the word here used signifies; (see ^{<13241>}1 Samuel 24:11); and as the Jewish sanhedrim, Scribes and Pharisees, sought after the soul or life of Christ, to take that away, as they did;

they have not set God before them. They did not consider themselves as under the omniscient eye of God; they did not set his word before them, as the rule of their conduct, but cast it behind their backs; nor did they regard his providential mercies and layouts as a motive to engage them to obedience to him, but despised them; they had not the fear of God before their eyes, nor in their hearts, nor any concern for his glory; and therefore did the wicked things they did against his servant.

Selah; on this word, (see Gill on “^{<1388D>}Psalm 3:2”).

Ver. 4. *Behold, God [is] mine helper*, etc.] This being a matter of wonder to be helped in so extraordinary a manner, and a sure and certain case, and what was deserving the attention of others; for the encouragement of their faith and hope in like cases, a “behold” is prefixed unto it: and what is here said is true of David’s son, the Messiah, and is expressed by him in much the same language, (^{<2810>}Isaiah 50:9); and of all the saints whom the Lord helps, as at first conversion, out of the pit wherein is no water, out of the horrible pit, the mire and clay of nature’s darkness, ignorance, and unbelief; so out of all their afflictions and temptations, and out of the hands of all their enemies; he helps in the exercise of grace, and in the discharge of duty; and he helps to all mercies, temporal and spiritual, needful for them; which help is quick and present, seasonable and suitable, always sufficient; and is what they have reason to expect both from what he has said to them in promise, and from what he has done for them;

the Lord [is] with them that uphold my soul; that ministered to his sustenance, as Abigail did, and that gathered to him and joined him, and exposed their lives in the defence of him; these the Lord was with, blessed, protected, and afforded them his gracious presence. Such there were with Christ; who followed him in the regeneration; who ministered to him of their substance, whom God rewarded in a way of grace; and he blesses them that bless his, and do good to them; they being the excellent in the earth, in whom is his delight, the apple of his eye, and his jewels. Or the sense is, that the Lord is he that upheld his soul; not only the chief of his upholders, but the only one: so R. Moses^{f711} interprets it, that he is the

alone upholder, and is instead of all upholders, and answers to them all; who upheld his soul in life, and followed him with his goodness: as when God is said to be the first, and “with the last”, the meaning is, that he is the first and the last, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 41:4); (see ⁴⁹³⁷Psalms 118:7); so he upheld the soul of Christ in the wilderness, and in the garden, and on the cross; (see ²³⁴¹Isaiah 42:1). And he upholds all his people in a providential way in their beings, and supplies them with all the necessaries of life; and, in a spiritual way, maintaining their spiritual life, supplying them with all grace, bearing them up under all trials, holding up their goings in his ways, and preserving them to the end.

Ver. 5. *He shall reward evil unto mine enemies*, etc.] That eyed him as Saul did; that observed his haunts, where he resorted, and who were with him, as the Ziphites did under Saul’s direction; as the Word ^{f712} here used for “enemies” signifies: the mischief they had devised for him, he believed, would be returned upon their own heads; the pit they digged they would fall into themselves; and the net they had spread for others their own feet would be taken in. This was true as of David’s enemies, so of Christ’s, the wicked Jews, who narrowly watched him to take every advantage against him;

cut them off in thy truth; root and branch, as Saul, and his family, and his courtiers, quickly were, according to the truth of promises made to David, and of threatenings unto them.

Ver. 6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee*, etc.] Not legal sacrifices; no, nor freewill offerings the law gives directions about, though the allusion is to them; but the freewill offerings of his mouth, (⁴⁹³⁸Psalms 119:108); the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, on account of help, salvation, and deliverance, as appears from the following clause; which he determines to offer, not by constraint, but willingly; not by force, but of a ready mind; freely, and with all his heart. The sacrifice of his antitype is himself, his soul and body, as in union with his divine Person; and this was offered up to God, against whom man has sinned, and whose justice must be satisfied; and this was done freely and voluntarily; he gave himself an offering; he laid down his life of himself, and that for sinners. The sacrifices of his people are their prayers and praises, their acts of beneficence, and the presentation of their souls and bodies in divine service; all which they do freely, under the influence of divine grace;

I will praise thy name, O Lord; which explains what is meant by sacrificing: this is what is due to the Lord, and comely in his people;

for [it is] good; either the name of God; and therefore to be praised. He himself is good, as, he is, both in a way of providence and of grace; and it is good, both pleasantly and profitably good, to sing praises to him, (~~1470~~ Psalm 147:1).

Ver. 7. *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble*, etc.] As he desired, (~~1020~~ 1 Samuel 26:24); that is, out of all his present trouble; not that he had no more afterwards; for as soon as one trouble is gone, generally speaking, another comes; but as God delivered him out of his present distress, so he believed he would deliver him out of all his afflictions in future times;

and mine eye hath seen [his desire] upon mine enemies: or revenge, as the Targum supplies it; not that he delighted in the destruction of his enemies, but in the justice of God glorified thereby, and in the goodness of God to him, in delivering him from them; (see ~~1680~~ Revelation 18:20).