

PSALM 54  **GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY**
A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

Hiding in God's Plain Sight – October 24, 2021

I. GENRE: Lament with Strong Confidence

- A.** The first 3 verses set the tone for the psalm—a time of peril & distress from which David needs divine rescue.
- B.** The second half of the poem (vv. 4-7) contains strong statements of trust and confidence, including a vow to bring a thank offering when the crisis is over.

II. SETTING

- A. AUTHOR:** David, part of a collection of his poems from Pss 51-70.
- B. BACKGROUND:** During Saul's campaign against David around 1013 BC.
 - 1.** The final heading to the psalm mentions the Ziphites' betrayal of David to Saul. They did this to David twice! 1 Sam 23:19ff; 26:1ff.
 - a.** This is one of 13 psalms which have historical headings, and over half of them come from the period of Saul's pursuit of David.
 - b.** Nearby Psalm 52 originated out of events in a similar period involving David and Doeg the Edomite. 1 Sam 22.
 - 2.** The settlement of Ziph was in Judah, 3 miles south of the city of Hebron.



PSALM 54 <small>© M. Scott Bashoor 2021</small>		
HEADINGS	LAMENT CRY FOR HELP AMONGST ENEMIES vv. 1-3	CONFIDENCE CELEBRATION OF HOPE IN GOD'S DELIVERANCE vv. 4-7
Authorization Consigned to the Tabernacle Choir Director Musical Note For Stringed Instruments Song Label <i>Masikl</i> (Perhaps "Instruction" or "Skillful Song") Author David Historical Setting The Ziphites' Betrayal of David to Saul (1 Sam 23:19; 26:1)	Introductory Cry for Help vv. 1-2 Plea for Divine Deliverance & Vindication v. 1 Plea for Divine Attention v. 2 Detail of Distress v. 3 The Onslaught of Treacherous Men v. 3a The Ungodliness of the Oppressors v. 3b [Selah]	Confession of Trust v. 4 Confidence in Divine Justice v. 5 The Sovereign Reversal of Evil v. 5a Imprecatory Prayer for Justice v. 5b Vow of a Thank Offering vv. 6-7 Pledge of a Future Offering v. 6 Reason for the Pledge: Confidence in God's Deliverance v. 7
PURPOSE: David cries to God for deliverance from treacherous neighbors who should have supported him. He leaves justice in God's hands and anticipates making a thank offering for God's deliverance. Type: Lament with Strong Confidence Author: David Date: Before David's enthronement in 1010 BC. Note: The superscriptions & sacrificial references may indicate David enlarged the original song in later years.		

- a. The Ziphites were Hebrews & part of Judah, David's tribe. David would rightly expect to find safety among them.
- b. But they chose to support the king whom God had rejected instead of David who was God's choice all along.

C. PLACEMENT:

1. Pss 52-55 all contain the label "A Maskil."
 - a. The root behind this word refers to skill/wisdom. Thus, it could refer to a skillful song (one requiring a skilled musician), or it could refer to a song which gives instruction leading to wisdom.
 - b. In this case, it seems to refer more to the musical difficulty.
2. Psalm 52 grew out of David's earlier conflict with Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam 22:9). The events in Psalm 54 grow out of 1 Sam 23 and 26.
3. Psalm 53:1 describes the "fool" who disregards God.
 - a. Some have seen a connection with one of David's enemies, Nabal, who is from the region of Maon and Ziph (1 Samuel 25) His name rhymes with the word for "fool." 1 Sam 25.
 - b. Psalm 53 was probably not written about Nabal. But when the psalms were later arranged, it was placed here as a fitting illustration of some of the opponents in David's life, like Nabal.

III. NOTES & APPLICATION

- A. The vow to bring a thank offering (v. 6) presents a challenge.
 1. Under Saul's reign the Tabernacle was hardly functioning, and in the previous story (1 Sam 22), Doeg the Edomite slew most of the priests. How could David expect to bring a thank offering (Ps 54:6)?

2. A couple answers are possible.

- a. David might be anticipating his future reign when he would restore the Tabernacle. This explanation is possible, but it has problems.

[1] Generally, a vow to give a thank offering anticipates fulfilling the vow as soon as possible, not years later.

[2] It would take 2-3 years before David would come to the throne (1010 BC) and reestablish the Tabernacle (1003 BC).

- b. David might have enlarged the psalm later.

[1] The superscription "For the Choir Director" had to have been added during David's time on the throne because there was no functioning choir directory during Saul's reign.

[2] David clearly edited some of his other poems (cf. 2 Sam 22 with Ps 18). It is possible that he later enlarged the original prayer of Ps 54 to include a vow of thanks. In this way, the psalm would provide a pattern for worshippers during his reign to emulate.

- B. The prayer for judgment (v. 5) may trouble us at first as Christian readers. But notice that David leaves judgment in God's hands, not his own. It is appropriate for us to pray for justice while also remembering that God may choose mercy.

IV. STRUCTURE: Lament (vv. 1-3) & Confidence (vv. 4-7).

- A. The mood of the two halves of the poem are readily obvious. The "Selah" at the end of v. 3 serves as a dividing point in this poem.
- B. The lament contains a plea (vv. 1-2) and a detail of the circumstances (v. 3).
- C. The expression of confidence includes a confession of trust (v. 4), an imprecatory prayer for justice (v. 5), & a vow to give a thank offering (vv. 6-7).