

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

LIV: Making The Lord Our Defense From Our Enemies

(Psalm 54:1-7)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul predicted that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus would suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), and when the believer faces overwhelming, evil aggression by such foes, he needs God's help and wisdom.
- B. Psalm 54:1-7 gives David's example of responding to such a crisis, so we view it for insight and edification:

II. Making The Lord Our Defense From Our Enemies, Psalm 54:1-7.

- A. The introductory remarks in the English Bible comprise the first *two* verses in the Hebrew text (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1021), so we stay with the verse numbering layout of the English Bible for clarity with this lesson.
- B. Those remarks reveal that the historical setting is recorded in 1 Samuel 23:13-29, and we review it here to understand the psalm (as follows): when David hid in the forest of Ziph, Saul's son, Jonathan visited him to encourage him. The Ziphites then told Saul of David's whereabouts and offered to help Saul get him, so Saul came to Ziph to kill David. Learning of this conspiracy, David fled into the wilderness of Maon, but the Ziphites informed Saul of this, so he pursued David there, and at one point, David went along on one side of a mountain while Saul pursued him on the other side, and only news of an invading Philistine band caused Saul temporarily to stop chasing David. Seeking to avoid Saul further, David then moved on down to En-gedi, an oasis above the western shore of the Dead Sea, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Samuel 23:29.
- C. Understanding this historical background to Psalm 54:1-7, we thus translate it as follows:
 - 1. "Save me, O my Elohim, by Your Name; vindicate (*din*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 192) me by Your warrior might (*geburah*, Ibid., p. 150)," Psalm 54:1.
 - 2. "O Elohim, hearken to my prayer; listen to the words of my mouth;" Psalm 54:2.
 - 3. "Because strangers (*zur*, Ibid., p. 266 [foreigners; typical of one's enemies]) are attacking me; ruthless, terror-striking men (*'aris*, Ibid., p. 792) who do not set Elohim in front of them [have no regard for, no sense of accountability (to Elohim)]. Selah," Psalm 54:3.
 - 4. "Behold! Elohim is a Help for me: Adonai is a Support (*samak*, Ibid., p. 701-702; Ibid., Kittel) for my life principle (*nepesh*, Ibid.; Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonymns of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59; the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual aspects of human life)," Psalm 54:4.
 - 5. "Let the calamity [they intend for me] return upon my foes; in Your reliability, destroy them," Psalm 54:5.
 - 6. "I will sacrifice a freewill offering to You; I will praise Your name, O Jahweh, because it is Good," v. 6.
 - 7. "For from all of my enemies He has snatched me away (*nasal*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 664-665; Hiphil stem = causative) and my eyes have looked [in triumph (NIV, ESV)] on my enemies," Psalm 54:7.
- D. We note significant observations and applications of this psalm (as follows):
 - 1. Just before the crisis began, David received Jonathan's encouraging support, so we must recall God's use of past encouragements to trust that He will help us in facing formidable foes in the present.
 - 2. When faced with the **humanly** overwhelming opposition of native Ziphite intelligence sources who exposed his location to the murderous, powerful king Saul so that he would eventually find and kill him, David made the Lord His "Help," "Support" (v. 4). We should also trust God to handle our similar crises!
 - 3. When we pray for God's help in such circumstances, as in David's case, He may help us just when we are about to be humanly defeated by our foes (cf. Hebrews 4:16). We must thus not give up hope if the crisis intensifies, but keep cleaving to the Lord in faith amid rising crises, still seeking His deliverance!
 - 4. We note that David tried to use his common sense to flee from the forest of Ziph to the wilderness of Maon, and then after being helped by God, still to try moving further from Saul's reach by going down to En-gedi. God wants us to do what we humanly can do to improve our situation as we trust Him for aid.
 - 5. God's sovereignty in letting the enemy Philistines invade in order to distract Saul from chasing David shows that we must expect God's assistance to be provided at times in the most unexpected ways!

Lesson: When facing evil, humanly overwhelming foes, David trusted God to be His Help and Support while doing what he himself could do to aid himself, seeing God deliver him by an unusual means through His sovereignty. God had provided the encouragement of Saul's supportive son Jonathan to direct David to trust the Lord to help.

Application: If we face humanly overwhelming, evil foes, may we follow David's example in Psalm 54:1-7.