

Series: Psalms
Title: Setting God Before Us
Text: Psalm 54: 1-7
Date: December 19, 2019
Place: SGBC, NJ

Psalm 54: 1: « To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David,

This Psalm is to the chief Muscian. “*On Neginoth*” means it was to be set to music and played in public worship. “*Maschil*” means it sets forth truth that is of utmost importance. David penned it by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. We are told the occasion when David penned this song next.

Psalm 54: 1:...when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? »

The Ziphims were of the tribe of Judah. These were David’s kinsmen and were supposed to be his brethren. But on two occasions they betrayed David by coming and telling king Saul that David was hiding near where they lived. The first time, Saul sent them back to make certain David was still there but David had departed. When David came back, they reported it to Saul a second time. This is David’s song when Saul was searching him out to kill him.

David typifies Christ. The Ziphims betrayed David to king Saul in search of the kings blessing and probably a reward. (1Sa 23:19-20)—the anti-type of the Ziphims is Judas who betrayed our Lord for money (Mt 26:14-16). Saul had 3000 men in his army pursuing David—the devil had thousands in his army pursuing Christ to the cross. David was utterly dependent upon God to save him—having taken the form of a servant, Christ was utterly dependent upon God, especially on the cross. The reason Christ, along with his redeemed David, depended upon God is because they had set God before their face.

Proposition: The reason a believer depends upon God and follows Christ’s steps is because they have set God before them.

Title: Setting God Before Us

HAVING SET GOD BEFORE US

Psalm 54: 1: Save me, O God by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2: Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

Those who have set God before them depend entirely upon God.

As God’s servant, Christ Jesus did not attempt to save himself by taking matters into his own hands. He prayed to the Father to save him “*by thy name.*” So did David. It is by God’s name that God is engaged to help his people. God’s name is his glory; his name is who he is.

Exodus 33: 18: And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19: And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim THE NAME of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Exodus 34: 5: And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed THE NAME of the LORD. 6: And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7: Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*;

God’s name—all this glory of God—is revealed in Christ Jesus the Lord. In Christ we behold the LORD Jehovah, God with us. In Christ we behold the LORD God, the covenant God. God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth to those in Christ alone. It is only in Christ that God is merciful to his people, forgiving our iniquity and transgression and sin, while at the same time, by no means clearing the guilty. David is praying for salvation by God’s name. Likewise, we pray for salvation by Christ Jesus the Lord.

Acts 4: 12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is NONE OTHER NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Another thing we will do if we have set God before us, not only did David not try to save himself, David did not try to justify himself. He asked God “*judge me by thy strength.*” David was a sinner. He was guilty of much sin. But Saul charged him falsely and David’s enemies were strong. So David put his cause into the hands of one stronger, his Redeemer, who was able to plead his case against his accusers. Our Lord Jesus Christ did the same when the devil and his demonic host charged Christ falsely. Christ knew no sin. Yet, when he was charged falsely, even when he bore the sin of his people and the wrath of God was poured out on him justly, Christ committed his cause to God his Father that “judgeth righteously” (1 Pet 2:23). Christ said,

Isaiah 50: 6: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7: For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8: *He is* near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9: Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who *is* he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Brethren, when we are utterly helpless, if we have set God before us, then by his grace we will not lean to our own understanding nor listen to our deceitful hearts, nor we will not take matters into our own hands. We will cast all our care on God to save us by his name, Christ Jesus. When the accuser of the brethren arises and oppresses us, if we have set God before us, then by God's grace we will not try to defend and justify ourselves before men. We will put our cause into Christ's hand to judge righteously for us. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is the name God is engaged to save us by because Christ bore all the shame of our sin and drank the cup of the wrath of God dry for his people. God saves and judges for all who call upon his name in truth because Christ made justice and mercy meet in harmony by suffering the blows of divine justice for God's elect. Therefore, it is just and right for God to save us by Christ's name and to judge those who falsely accuse us by Christ our Judge.

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

NOT HAVING SET GOD BEFORE US

Psalm 54: 3: For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

Here we are told to lay something to heart, to weigh this. This is what we will do if we have not set God before us. We will arise against our kinsmen and oppress our brethren as though we were strangers to them.

With David these were not strangers according to the flesh. They were David's kinsmen, men of Judah. Christ's own kinsmen arose against him as strangers. The men against David were not supposed to be strangers according to the spirit. They professed to worship God in truth. Those that crucified Christ did so crying out to God thinking they were doing a righteous thing. Brethren, should we expect any different than what our Master suffered?

Matthew 10: 34: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35: For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36: And a man's foes shall be they of HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.

Matthew 13: 57: [Christ's own town folk and family] were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in HIS OWN COUNTRY, AND IN HIS OWN HOUSE.

But what caused Saul and the Ziphims to do this to David? What caused the religious and irreligious to crucify Christ? What causes a brother to rise up against a brother as if he were a stranger? "*They have not set God before them. Selah.*"

Believer, when we behold Christ before us bearing our putrid, vile, obnoxious sins, when we behold him before us crying out in our room and stead, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", when we behold Christ before us for whose sake God proclaims to us "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" then beholding Christ before us breaks the stony, self-righteous, Pharisaical heart of our flesh and creates in us a new, broken and contrite heart (Jer 31:34).

It is beholding Christ crucified in my room and stead that makes me hate my sin and it is his grace that makes me turn from it—I can't turn you from yours nor you from mine—the Spirit of God does it by setting Christ before us. By the Holy Spirit, it is beholding Christ crucified for the multitude of my transgressions that makes me love my brethren for whom Christ died and overlook the multitude of their transgressions. It is beholding God forgive me for Christ's sake who makes me forgive my brethren who have offended me far, far less than I have offended God. It is beholding Christ my Scapegoat bearing my heavy burdens away forever that makes me bear the light burdens of my sinning, offensive brethren.

Brethren, please get this. If I am tempted to rise up against a brother or sister because they have offended me, I must remember who it is I am really wrestling against.

Ephesians 6: 10: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11: Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the WILES OF THE DEVIL. 12: For we wrestle NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, but against PRINCIPALITIES, against POWERS, against the RULERS of the darkness of this world, against SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS in high *places*.

The devil's objective is to turn every believing child of God from having Christ set before us by making us think we only have issues with another sinner like ourselves—"but we wrestle not against flesh and blood." "But, preacher, that brother or sister rising up against you is flesh and blood!" Yes, but that is not really who is wrestling against me. We wrestle against the crafty, cunning, subtle, wiles of the devil. "But preacher, you are just making excuses and letting your offending brother or sister off the hook for offending you." Oh, no, I am putting the blame right where it belongs. I am telling you what makes us not forgive, not love, not be longsuffering, but instead, accuse, condemn and give up on a brother who has offended us—

"for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The devil is so crafty that he can trick us into not believing it is him that is truly offending us.

What is the devil's purpose in beguiling believers like this? The devil's goal is to turn us from God's word so that we do not have Christ set before us. Satan does not want a believer to deal with his brethren according to the scriptures. The devil does not want you to see what God says in his word that you are to do concerning any issue dealing with brethren. Therefore, we need to always have *"our loins girt about with truth"* (Eph 6: 14).

The devil will make you feel just in pointing out the sins of a brother and just in condemning one Christ says is justified by his blood. Therefore we must *"have on the breastplate of righteousness"* (Eph 6:14). We need Christ our Righteousness as protecting our heart from being like the accuser of the brethren. We must continually hear God command us *"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Eph 4:32). Listen to how David had Christ his Righteousness protecting his breast. David found Saul asleep because scripture says God put a sleep upon Saul and his men. Remember, Saul was the one who was trying to kill David. He was the one forcing David to sleep in the hills and caves. So moved by the devil to speak unjustly so as to tempt David, one of his men asked David to let him kill Saul while he slept. Did David obey the devil's temptation? *"And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?"* (1 Sam 26: 9). David had on the breastplate of Christ his Righteousness. Therefore, rather than unjustly killing the LORD's anointed, David trusted him to God.

The devil will put walking shoes on our feet to make us forsake our brethren and sow discord whenever we are offended by a brother. Therefore, *"we must have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Eph 6:15). We must have God before us declaring how Christ made peace for us with God—even when we were yet his enemies. Beholding how Christ reconciled us to God when as yet Christ was an enemy to us in our defiled mind, his great love makes us seek peace rather than division. That is why Christ said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"* (Mt 5: 9).

The devil will shoot fiery darts and set us on fire with our fleshly lusts of strife so that all we see is flesh and blood wrestling against us. A believer hears or sees a brother speak a word that offends him. It is the devil shooting his fiery dart. With a little fire kindled, that believer answers his brother back with an offending word. Another fiery dart of the devil. Now the other believer speaks a little louder as he casts it back in the other brother's teeth. The devil shoots more fiery darts, so back and forth they go, louder and louder, angrier and angrier. All the while the devil sits back and laughs. He loves it because no matter which one oppresses the other, it is one of Christ's own wrestling against flesh and blood like they never even knew Christ and like they are utter strangers to one another. Therefore, *"Above all, [we must continually] take the shield of faith [having Christ before us], wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"* (Eph 6:16).

The devil will fill our heads with thoughts against our offending brother. We have no weapon to protect us from doing exactly opposite of God's word in retaliation. Therefore we must always have Christ set before us by *"taking the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Eph 6:17). I must hear God say in his word that for Christ's sake he will never leave me nor forsake me, if I would never leave nor forsake my brethren. I must continually hear how Christ bore my burden, if I would bear the burden of my sinning brother. I must continually hear God say in his word that for Christ's sake he everlastingly loved me to Christ, if I would love my offending brother to Christ—in fact, when my brother offends me most is when he needs me most to love him back to Christ—he does not need me to forsake him; he needs me to love him and to love him back to Christ. Therefore, we need God set before us by having the word of God as a helmet to protect our head and to be the sword by which the Spirit cuts our fleshly heart and strengthens our new.

But we cannot put on this armor except Christ put it on us. Therefore, the devil tries to keep us offended that it might hinder our prayers. So we must be *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"* (Eph 6:18). That is what David is doing in Psalm 54. David knows that he has no strength to stand against the wiles of the devil. David knows the devil will make you think you are strong and could never be beguiled while you are weak and deceived. David knew we must be made strong in the Lord; we must have the power of Christ's might resting upon us. As we call out for God to save us by his name and for Christ to judge us by his strength, for those he redeemed, Christ comes and puts on us this whole armor of God and saves us from the devil and his seed. It is the very reason Christ permitted the devil to sift us. That we might behold Christ before us and know without him we can do nothing.

Did Christ come and put this armor on David and save him from Saul? Saul got to where David was with all his men. *"But there came a messenger unto Saul"*—Christ sent the messenger—*"saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land."*—Christ sent the Philistines to invade the land—*"Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth"* (1 Sam 23:27) It means the Rock of Divisions. Christ is that Rock of division who saves his redeemed people from the devil and his seed. Christ is that name who saves us and the Judge who executes righteousness for us upon our enemies.

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

Psalm 54: 4: Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. 5: He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6: I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. 7: For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

When Christ makes us behold him before us—saving and judging on our behalf—we behold in a clearer light that Christ truly is all my salvation. David beheld God before him turning Saul back and David’s whole spirit changed from fear to joy as he said, “*Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.*” Believer do not let the devil tempt you into listening to the lusts of your flesh so that you take matters into your own hands—Christ is our helper and he is with our brethren that uphold our life.

But as for David’s enemies, he said, “*He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.*” Oh, may God let us not be found as those who are the enemies of our brethren. But God make us to be upholders of one another.

Beholding, Christ before us, he makes us worship and praise him from a true heart, freely because we want to. David said, “*I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.*”

May you “*Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.*” Come now and make each of your people behold Christ set ever before us, that we might love our offending brethren and give them mercy and grace and forgiveness, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has given us who have offended him far more.

Amen!