

# Clinging to the Name

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Well, you might not realize this, we don't really plan our hymns around the text. We kind of prepare our hymns a few weeks in advance and then let the text fall where it may and it is always amazing to me as I know kind of the background of the process, how that works out and how the Lord providentially brings everything to fit together and the hymns reinforce the text that we preach on even though we don't specifically plan it that way. That's certainly true tonight with the song that we just sang, "Great is thy faithfulness," is a perfect way to frame our approach to Psalm 54 because it is a prayer of David where he is reaching out to God and asking for God's help in the midst of severe opposition in his life and he is laying hold of the name of God, laying hold of the faithfulness of God and appealing to God on that basis to help him in the midst of betrayal by men. You know, we all go through life, we all know something sooner or later about being betrayed by men. Spouses betray one another, some of you have felt that awful sting in your life. Family members or a boss betrays you or a friend that you thought was close and someone that you could trust suddenly turns on you and the pain of that is very very great, isn't it? It's very difficult to realize that a trust and a relationship has been broken. Well, Psalm 54 is a text that is good for you if you are in the midst of that or if you've tasted that bitter thing in your mouth in the course of life. It is a wonderful Psalm to restore your heart if you have felt the sting of opposition that comes to you without cause.

So once again tonight as we come to God's word, we come to a book that understands us. We come to a book, we come to a Psalm that speaks to us in life and, as it were, puts its arm around us and comforts us with a sense that the people of God have been down that same road before and to realize that God's word anticipates that and helps us in the midst of it. So if you're feeling the sting of such things tonight as you come with us, I trust that this Psalm will be a great encouragement to you. For those of you maybe that are visiting, haven't been with us very often in the past or maybe joining us over the live stream and aren't aware of the course of our pulpit ministry, for the past couple of years, I would say, we have been trying to systematically work our way through the Psalms. We started at Psalm 1 and then went to Psalm 2 and 3, and you get the idea of how that goes, and tonight we are now at Psalm 54, looking forward to another 96 weeks, the time is getting away from us, just another 96 weeks of studying the Psalms together one per night is the way that we're doing that.

Psalm 54, the inscription gives us a sense of the historical occasion, the circumstances under which David wrote this Psalm. It says it's,

A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"

That inscription sets the time period for this Psalm in the time before David became king of Israel. And you may recall from reading the Old Testament over the course of your time, that King Saul distrusted David in such a way that he wanted to kill him and often hunted David down, looking to find him so that he could kill him because he had come to hate him. And David spent a good period of time fleeing from Saul and trying to hide from him so that he would not be met with that fate. Now, during one of those times of hiding, actually twice, the Ziphites, the people from a region in Judah, told Saul where David was hiding. They betrayed his location so that Saul would know where to find him. They were hoping to gain favor with the king and they were more than happy to hand David over to him in order to gain an advantage.

If you look in your Bible, turn back to the left to 1 Samuel 23 just to give you a brief taste of what we're looking at here. 1 Samuel 23:19-20 you read about this. 1 Samuel 23:19-20 you can see Scripture fitting together in this way. It says, "Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.'" Humanly speaking, David's life was in danger. Wicked people who had favor with the king were arrayed against him and were seeking to hand him over so that he might be slaughtered at the hands of a hostile king. The betrayal was quite great and the threat to David was immediate.

Look over at 1 Samuel 26:1 where again we see, "the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?' So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph." Now look, this is a time of great peril to David. He is in tremendous danger. There is no one with authority, humanly speaking, that he can turn to for protection. And the thing of this is that David had not wronged Saul, he had not wronged the Ziphites, they were arrayed against him and wanted him dead. They had the power to do that and they hated him without a cause, much as our Lord Jesus was hated without a cause, without reason, and people hated him. Well, beloved, just wanting to kind of keep this close and personal tonight. If you know something about being hated without cause, you know something about people turning against you without reason, you have a friend in Christ. You have a friend in the Scriptures. You have a friend in Psalm 54 that comes and says, as it were, that this text understands and David from that position of vulnerability, that position of danger, prays out to God and we see the text of that in Psalm 54.

And with brevity, this is a short Psalm, only seven verses in our English text, and yet with depth David exemplifies a spiritual response that you can lay hold of in all manner of

human affliction. This particularly deals with betrayal as the Psalms grouped around this Psalm 54 tend to deal with that theme, but what you're going to find is that there is a pattern of prayer here in this Psalm, there is a model, even more there are principles about the nature of God for you to lay hold of and for your soul to find strength and comfort in the midst of it all. Speaking, these are principles that are available to those who belong to the true God, to those of you who have put your faith in Christ. This is your heritage. This is your birthright. This is what belongs to you. This is in your spiritual vault in order to draw upon and to, as it were, spend it to the good of your soul.

So let's go back now to Psalm 54 with that background in mind, with that encouragement that gives us a sense of anticipation that what we sang in the hymn, "Great is thy faithfulness," is now going to unfold itself before us in the text of the trustworthy word of God. And in this Psalm, in Psalm 54, David frames his prayer. Things like this are so obvious when they are pointed out to you, so easy to overlook sometimes if you don't know to look for them. David frames his prayer with a literary technique that we call inclusio. That's a .25 word that I like and we often refer to it because Scripture often uses it. It simply means that a larger portion of Scripture is framed by the same word or by the same phrase, and so you see it at the start and you see it at the beginning and it frames the text that lies in between and gathers it all up so that you understand that the whole text is flowing from a single theme, from a single idea.

And what is that theme? What is that perspective of this entire Psalm? Oh, it's sweet to see. Look at verse 1 where David prays,

1 Save me, O God, by Your name,

That's all I want you to see right now, "by Your name." And then when you drop down to verse 6 after he has gone through his prayer, after he has promised to give thanks to God he says in verse 6, he says, "Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good." What does that mean for our understanding tonight, the fact that it starts with "Your name" and basically ends with "Your name"? It means that this whole Psalm is an appeal to the name of God and I think that these little markers like that in the text are so helpful because it gives you something very specific and tangible to grab hold of and say, "Okay, I see the engine that is driving this Psalm. I see what's giving power to this Psalm as it's being unfolded before me." This isn't simply a random collection of seven verses, there is one theme that is driving what David is doing in this Psalm and that theme in Psalm 54 is the name of God.

You say, "Yeah, I've got a name. My name is Steve or my name is George or my name is Susan, whatever it may be. What's that got to do with anything?" Well, as we've said in times gone by, when it comes to studying the nature of God, when it comes to studying Scripture, when Scripture speaks of the name of God it is doing more than giving us the term by which God is identified. The name signifies far more than what we're used to. You know, in our modern way of using names, you call me Don, I call you George and we don't really think that much about it. That's just what we call each other because that's what our parents chose to name a son a number of years ago. But in Scripture it's a

different story, particularly when you refer to the name of God. Watch the pivot here. The name of God signifies the totality of his character. It is a representative term for all that God is, not simply what we say to him, the term by which we address him when we pray, this is a term that is invoking the entire character of God.

Look over at Exodus 3. You can see this in a couple of familiar passages that we'll look at just to give you a sense. David is praying as an Old Testament saint, he's praying with a knowledge of the writings of Moses in his mind and what do the writings of Moses say about the name of God? And what perspective does it give to us about it? Well, it's very powerful. In Exodus 3:13 you'll remember that God had appeared to Moses in a burning bush and had made himself known and he sends Moses back to the people of Israel so that they would know that God had spoken and in chapter 3, verse 13, look at the text with me, "Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?'" And God declares to him the great name of Yahweh. "God said to Moses," in verse 14, "'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"" Notice the connection. Moses says, "God, what do I tell them Your name is?" And he says, "You tell them that I AM WHO I AM," a name that is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be." I am. God is self-existent. He is who he is. That is his name. And the name speaks to the fact, to the being of God, it speaks to the fact that God exists by virtue of his own nature and power. God is not derivative of someone else. He had, as we studied in our systematic theology series back in the fall, he had no beginning, he has always been and he will always be. He exists out of his own power. He needs nothing from anyone because he has always existed, he always will exist, and he exists out of his own very power. He is dependent on no one.

God says, "I AM WHO I AM." And beloved, God, every word is important here, God will always thus exist unchanged. God is who he is, he has always been who he is, he will always be who he is and he never changes. That is all bound up in the name of God and who he is. So when we talk about approaching the name of God, when we think about praying to the name of God and appealing to the name of God, part of what we are doing is we are appealing to the supreme being in the universe who has no parallels and no challengers to his authority. We are appealing to unthinkable, unmeasurable greatness in the being of God. That's what his name tells us. He is who he is. "I AM WHO I AM," God says and this is who he always will be.

Do you realize that when God revealed himself to Moses and said, "I AM WHO I AM" back 1,400 years before the time of Christ, 3,500 years in round numbers from this time, 400 years go by and David is praying to the name and 2,000 years go by and Christ appears and manifests God in human flesh, I should say 1,000 years go by, 2,000 years ago from our perspective and now 2,000 years later, here we are millennia are passing by, which is enough to make you feel kind of small in the process, isn't it, just to think like that, but do you realize that when we think about God, when we think biblically about God, when we pray to God, that he is the exact same today as he was 3,500 years ago when David prayed? Do you know what? You're not the same as you were this morning. We change from hour to hour, don't wait? God never changes. So when we understand

something about the immutable unchanging nature of the self-existent God, we realize that we are entering into an eternal majestic realm and we appeal to his name out of our puny earthly circumstances, we appeal to something that is transcendent when we appeal to his name.

Now, as God in the progress of revelation made himself known further to Moses, he further disclosed on another occasion the further significance of his name. Look over at Exodus 33. These are really important texts, Exodus 3, Exodus 33, Exodus 34, that we will also look at in a moment, but all we're doing here, beloved, as we study Scripture together tonight, all we're doing here is we're letting Scripture interpret Scripture. What does the name of God mean as we read Psalm 54? We look at what other scriptures say about the name of God, what God himself has said about his own name so that we have a proper understanding when we study Psalm 54 and realize what it is that David is doing when he appeals to that great name.

Exodus 33:18, actually let's start at verse 17 at the start of the paragraph there. "The LORD said to Moses," LORD all caps referring to the Hebrew name Yahweh; it's a translation of that Hebrew name Yahweh when it's in all caps like that. "The LORD said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.' Then Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!' And God said to him, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim," what? "The name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." So God says to Moses, he says, "I will display My glory to you and I will do it by making My name known to you." And in just a few short verses down in chapter 34, verse 6, God does exactly that. And in verse 5 of chapter 34 of Exodus, "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed." Okay, here's what's going on, God says, "I'm going to show you My name," and this is what he did when he made his name known, this is what he said. What did he say about his name? "The LORD passed by," verse 6, "in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.'" And in verse 8, "Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship."

When God made his name known to Moses, it was like a ray of pure white light hitting a prism and then shattering, as it were, using a metaphor here, shattering into multiple colors which displayed different attributes of his character. His name is the sum of the attributes which he eternally possesses and so in making his name known to Moses, God declares his attributes to Moses. And what are those attributes in verse 6? Look at it again with me: attributes of compassion and grace; slow to anger; abounding in lovingkindness, a word that means loyal love and truth; and he is a God of lovingkindness; merciful to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin; and yet he's also a God of holiness, a God of justice, who does not leave unrepentant iniquity unpunished. God says, "This is who I

am. This is what My name is. Let Me tell you who I am," God says, "I am a compassionate, gracious, holy, lovingkindness God to my people." That's what the name of God represents.

So who was God to David as he called upon his name? Christian, in the midst of your struggles and sorrows that this day in particular maybe has especially brought to you today, who is this God that you appeal to when you pray to him in this hour, when you pray to him and go home at night in the midst of whatever is happening? Who is this God? He is a God of loyal love to you. He's a God of faithful kindness, a God of mercy, a God of power. A God who also deals righteously with the guilty. He's a God who – watch this – he's a God who never abandons his people.

Do you know God like that? Do you realize that when we talk about who God is that we're talking about someone who is a real person with real attributes that can be known and can be trusted? When we pray to God, we're calling on a person by name and whose name represents things that we can depend upon, that we can trust, that we can know, beloved, that you can bank your life on. This is who God is. This is who our Lord Jesus manifested to us in human flesh and of whom the New Testament speaks and says that he is in very nature God, that all the fullness of deity dwells in him. Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? He is Yahweh in human flesh. He is this great Son of God who has the great essence of God and shares all of his attributes in perfection eternally without end, without change, without diminishment, who is loyal, who is strong, who is loving, who is compassionate, who is gracious. Do you need someone like that in your life today in the midst of your sorrows, in the midst of your struggles, someone to call upon? That's what we have in Psalm 54. We have a pattern of what that looks like. It's as though, I used the phrase "engine" earlier, it's as though someone has handed the key to you and said, "Here's the key to your spiritual life. Turn it on and go."

Go back to Psalm 54 now with that perspective in mind and with all of that lengthy introduction, we'll now be able to go through the text fairly quickly. Beloved, what you see in Psalm 54 is you see David clinging to the name; calling upon the name, clinging to it as his only hope, as his source of strength, as his hope of protection when there is nothing else earthly to help him. Have you been in that position? Do you know what that's like? You know in those times where, as some people have said, you don't know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you've got? Do you know something about that? Have you been in a period of life like that where there is no human authority to appeal to or to help you? Where friends, maybe they're well-meaning but they can't bail you out, they can't answer your problem for you? And things are piling up and opposition rises and what do you do when you have nowhere to go to, it seems like? Beloved, if you're in that kind of position, Psalm 54 tells you what to do. Psalm 54 shows you the way and gives you confidence of the response of God out of his loyal love and faithfulness to his people. Psalm 54 teaches us how to walk with God. It tells us how to know God and we love God's word for it as a result.

You can break this down into two or three sections. We're going to break it down into two simple sections here this evening and, first of all, we're going to see as David is

clinging to the name, first of all what does he do as he clings to the name, as he calls upon the name? Point 1 in your outline here this evening: he makes an appeal to God. He makes an appeal to God. And you can almost hear David groan as the Psalm opens. He says,

1 Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power. 2  
Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.

David is appealing to God as this Psalm opens. In these first two verses he hasn't said yet what is troubling him, he is simply – watch this – he is simply invoking the name of God as he begins his prayer. He says, "God, I know who You are by name. I know You as Yahweh. I know You as this God of lovingkindness and faithfulness and power and love and mercy to Your people. To that aspect of Your character, O God, to the totality of who You are, I apply myself here in this Psalm." It's very profound, isn't it? He's not simply crying out in desperation, his prayer is rooted in a true knowledge of God. So knowing that God is a God of deliverance to his people, a God of loyal love to his people, David knowing that he belongs to this God, he asks for deliverance and he asks for justice as he prays here.

Look at it in verse 1 with me, "Save me, O God, deliver me," in other words, "I am in distress and I am under threat, God. Save me. Deliver me. Help me in my earthly circumstances because I have no one else to appeal to, I have nowhere else to turn." And beloved, look, we all understand, those of us that have walked with God for any length of time at all, we all know how discomfoting that is. What a hard situation that is to be in when all of your resources are spent and you don't know where your next paycheck is coming from, when friends have turned against you, when other things have gone wrong and there is nowhere else to go. We all know that the miserable sense of uncomfortable feeling that that brings, realizing that there is no deliverance at hand that we can see, nothing else that we can trust in, nothing else that we can turn to. Beloved, what I hope this Psalm shows you is that that kind of situation in your life God has given you in that time a great spiritual opportunity. He has laid before you not material relief, he has laid before you a great spiritual opportunity to trust him, to know him and to take him at his word and at his name and say, "God, I have nowhere else to turn to. I stand alone here. God, help me! No one else can and no one else will." He says, "vindicate me by Your name. God, give me justice." In the context of what we saw, "God, these wicked people," who later in the Psalm you'll see are godless apostate people, "are just out to get me and I have no one to protect me. God, You help me!" In essence in these first two verses, if we could summarize them, David is saying, "God, pay attention and act and help me. Do what is right, God. You are a God of justice, I know that to be true. You see the injustice of this situation. God, vindicate me. Judge my cause and help me and show me to be in the right and give me relief that I can't produce on my own." It's a vigorous strong prayer.

And in verse 3, having made that appeal, he proceeds to state the reason for it, why it is that he is praying on this occasion. In verse 3 he says – you know, you might stop between verses 2 and 3 and say, "David, why are you praying this way? What's the

matter?" What's on David's mind? What is the occasion of this prayer? Verse 3 answers it. He says,

3 For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God before them.

"God, these men don't even know me and they are after me. They are violent and they are godless. There is no internal restraint on their heart that would cause them to hold back. There is no mercy in them. They are violent wicked people and they are out to get me and, God, I have nowhere else to turn. Save me. Deliver me. Help me. And God, pay attention and do something quick!" Their wicked conduct shows that they were not following Yahweh, they were not considering the demands of Scripture on their lives. No inner restraint. All that stood between them and the destruction of David was an opportunity and so David calls out to God and says, "God, I appeal to Your name. I appeal to the fullness of who You are. Help me in this situation." A pretty simple prayer, really, in one sense. There is no real complicated theology or complicated Hebrew behind our English text here. You can see this. You can relate to it. You can implement it tonight when you kneel down beside your bed.

There at the end of verse 3, over a little bit probably toward the right-hand margin of your Bible you see the word "Selah," a word that calls for contemplation. It says, "Let's stop and meditate here for just a moment." It also acts as a break between the sections of the Psalm. But you stop there for just a minute and say, "What has happened in these first three verses? What is the simple thing that we can say about this text that has happened?" Here's what's happened: a man who knows God and who trusts God has appealed to God. "God, I know You by name. God, I am in distress. I appeal to Your name as my basis for help."

So many things that are wrapped up in that. David is out beyond his human resources. He has no resources of his own to help. He calls out to God and appeals to his name, not to David's own merit as he does this, and in that sense he even gives us a picture of what the initial cry of repentance and saving faith looks like. "God, I have no spiritual resources of my own. I have no merit of my own. I come before You as a broken sinner who has broken Your law, violated and now guilt is upon me. God, I appeal to Your name for salvation. God, I appeal to the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and risen for sinners. I look outside of myself and I appeal to who You are. I appeal to the promise of Christ who says, 'Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'" You see, this appeal is so simple, it is so basic. It is the basic cry of initial salvation now to those who would hear the Gospel. It's the same helpless cry that the child of God makes in his distress. "God, my Father, I appeal to who You are as my hope here."

And do you know something, beloved? Think about it, I just want you to think about your God here. I want you to think about who it is that you know in Christ and what he is like and the surpassing value of knowing him, especially in those times of betrayal and rejection and all that junk. Isn't it precious that when no earthly ear can hear you, isn't it precious that perhaps in those times where no earthly hand will be extended to help you,



isn't it precious when you've gone through those betrayals of which we spoke at the beginning of the message, isn't it precious to know that you can go to the God who is known by his name, the God of surpassing power, the Supreme One in the universe, and know that his ear will hear your prayer? That he will bend down, as it were, and condescend to your need and receive you sympathetically? Human sympathy by comparison is nothing to that. All of a sudden you're on the wings of eagles appealing to the name of God. You're soaring in the heights saying, "Men may despise me, men may reject me, but God receives me. God hears my prayer. God is faithful to me. Hallelujah, I'm flying in the clouds!" you say to yourself because of who God is. And the sympathy of the one true God is infinitely more valuable than the sympathy of a million people on earth and I love him for that, don't you? That's who he is by name.

So David appeals to the name of God knowing that God will hear him when he prays because of who God is as known by his name. Well, secondly, having prayed, what does David then do as this Psalm unfolds? You see his affirmation of trust. His affirmation of trust. You kind of see David's response as he prays. This is part of the exercise of your faith that you go through in the midst of those times of distress, beloved, and this takes spiritual work. It's one thing to know about the name of God and to be able to recite his attributes, it's another thing, as we said on Sunday, just Sunday, just 60 hours ago when we were preaching on Proverbs 3 about trusting God and not leaning on your own understanding, Proverbs 3:5-6. You can get the message, there are probably copies of it on the way out if you're visiting with us. We'd love for you to take all those CDs if you wanted to. But part of trust, part of this response of calling on and clinging to the name of God is affirming that you believe there is significance in having done so. David here in Psalm 54 works out the implications of the name of God for his situation.

Look at verse 4 and notice the first person singular pronouns. I love, always love pointing things like this out to you. Verse 4,

4 Behold,

He calls attention to it with power, with a striking sense, "Behold. God, vindicate me. God, deliver me. These men have not set You before them."

4 Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.

And that word "my" is critical. Beloved, this is where it moves from theory to personal possession in your life. Everything is at stake in the way that you think about God and the way that you walk with him. Everything is at stake with how you see and respond to the kinds of things that are right here in verse 4. This word "my" is critical because David personally appropriates the character of God to his situation.

You see, beloved, it's not just that in general God is a kind and merciful God and that out there someplace in the heavens is a good God who reigns. That's not it. That doesn't go far enough. It's not just that God helps and sustains people in general. That's not it. That's not the call on your heart to stop there short of the gates of glory, so to speak. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. That's not it. What you have to see from Scripture and what you have to appropriate in your heart is this: it is the confidence, the trust that says, "That God is my God. This God who is made known by His name, this God belongs to me. He helps me. He sustains me." And all of a sudden you have ascended into a high and mighty fortress who is your God when you're starting to think like that. "This God of great loyal love is my God and that means that in the midst of my distress, what's going to happen? My God will show and manifest His loyalty to me come what may." And all of a sudden you have surrounded yourself in a shield of an impenetrable loyal love of God that surrounds your life and defines the nature of your existence come what may. So perhaps with weak and feeble knees you bend down and you call on this God, your God, and you do not simply ask for help, that's part of it, yes, David did that in the first three verses, but you go further in advance and say, "God, I know that You will help me. I know that You will sustain me. Not because I see how the circumstances can work out because, frankly, I don't see that at all. I have no idea how this works out for good, O God, but I don't need to know that because I know You and that's enough." So David declares to the praise and glory of God, he declares for those who would read his words later, "God is my helper."

Look at verse 4, "The Lord is the sustainer of my soul," and what does that mean? It has consequences for those who are wickedly sinfully arrayed against David.

5 He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness.

That's a stunning verse, isn't it? "Destroy them in Your faithfulness." Wow. Is it right for David to pray that way, destroy them? Well, beloved, think about it this way: part of the name of God as we saw in Exodus 34 is God said, "By My name I will by no means clear the guilty. I'm a God of justice." Do you know what? When we pray for God to be a just God, we appeal to one of his unchangeable attributes. When God displays his justice, do you know what? There are consequences to evildoers. You see it in Revelation 11, for example, in the New Testament, that God will destroy the wicked and the truth of Scripture is that unrepentant men will face God in justice and in wrath. This is serious stuff and people say, "Well, I'm not sure David should have prayed that way." Listen, listen, if God is a God of justice, then don't we have a privilege, a prerogative, don't we even have a responsibility to appeal for justice? And if justice is exercised, beloved, there will be consequences for evildoers.

And let me remind you of something really important of what David is doing and what he is not doing here. We won't take the time to look at it but as you read the life of David during the course of Saul pursuing him, on at least two different occasions he had the opportunity to slay Saul and refused to do so. He could have killed Saul because Saul was unaware of David's presence. He could have struck him down and that would have been the end of it but he didn't do it. What does that say about David? What does it say about the nature of this prayer? It says that David refused to take matters into his own hands. He left room for the vengeance of God. He left room for the wrath of God as Scripture speaks about in Romans 12. He did not take matters into his own hands but he brought the matter before God and laid it before the name of God and said, "God, I just ask You

to act according to Your name and I will leave it with You. I will not take revenge on my own." What he's saying is, "God, they are evil. It's going to boomerang on them." What those men who are pursuing David sent out in human malice and threw it out like an Aussie boomerang, it's going to come back on them, energized not simply by the human motivations that started the process but energized by divine retribution on guilty people who have no regard for the law of God. So when David prays, "Destroy them in Your faithfulness," beloved, he is not wickedly longing for personal revenge here, he's asking God to vindicate his character and when God vindicates his character, there are consequences to it for those who oppose him. There is no sin in his heart. He is appealing to God's unchanging name for urgently needed protection. God is a God of justice and righteousness as well as a God of grace and mercy. So David here as he affirms his trust in God in the things that he says here in verse 5, his affirmation of trust, leads him to anticipate the fall of his enemies. "God, this cannot come out well for them because Your justice guarantees it and therefore, Father, work out Your justice according to Your will and I will trust You and I will keep hands off until You act and not take matters into my own hand," as shown by the way he refused to lift his hand against Saul.

So David is confident that God will deal with his enemies. "You are my sustainer. You'll help me. You will recompense the evil to my foes. I will come through this threat safe on the other side," he says. And he goes one step further with his affirmation of trust, having said that. Notice this: David is affirming that before it happens. David doesn't withhold his expression of trust until he sees how it works out. "God, I know who holds the future. That's all I need to know to know that this comes out well for me." That's an affirmation of trust in the name of God.

And as we bring this to a close here in just a couple of minutes now, David goes one step further in the remainder of the Psalm. Having pledged his confidence in deliverance, he says, "Once that deliverance comes, I'm going to do something, God." Verse 6, he says,

6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

"God, when You deliver me," not if, "when You deliver me, I'm going to give You thanks." He makes an allusion to the free will offerings that were part of the Levitical system to help facilitate a godly walk among Old Testament saints. "God, I will come and willingly give a free will offering in which I declare for all to see my gratitude for the deliverance that You've given me. God, I will thank You when You deliver me." Notice one more time the object of his thanks there in verse 6. "I will give thanks to Your name. I will give thanks to all that You are."

These things are so precious, aren't they? David clings to the name in trouble and he gives thanks to the name for deliverance from the trouble all in this one Psalm. It is a different aspect of response to the one unchanging God who is good. In trouble, I cling to the name and say, "On the basis of Your name, save me. On the basis of Your name which is the source of Your motivation to deliver me, I give thanks to Your name. I give thanks to all that You are." And every one of us who know Christ in this room should be

able to flashback and say, "God, I remember times where You delivered me. In the spirit of this moment, O God, I give thanks to Your name for what You did in the past even as I trust You for the deliverance that I need here tonight."

Trust and thanks, appeal and affirmation and the outcome is so certain that David can identify it in the past tense in verse 7. Look at verse 7 with me. At the end of verse 6 he says, "I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good." Then he expands on it and he says, "For," because, for this reason, "You are good because

7 For He has delivered me from all trouble, And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.

It's interesting that it is stated in the past tense there but it's not that it has happened already. What he's saying is that, "God, Your deliverance is so certain, Your help to me is so sure because of Your name, that even though I haven't experienced it in time yet, I can speak of it as a past tense event because it is that certain to occur. Your help is so certain in the future that it is as though it has already happened and therefore I give thanks to You." Appealing to that great name in trouble, affirming our trust for it knowing the certain answer that God's character will give. Beloved, take your sorrows, take your betrayals, take the uncertainties to the name and cling to it tonight.

Let's pray.

*O God, God, we magnify Your great and holy name. We know You to be the God of lovingkindness, the God of compassion, the God of mercy. We know that for sure because we have experienced salvation in Christ and we love You and we thank You for it. And You saved us to make us Your people and to be our God through good and bad, through praise and ill report, through strength and weakness, joy and sorrow, riches and poverty. You are our God through it all and so we love Your name. And Father, tonight we appeal to Your name on behalf of those who have felt sorrow hit them today. We ask for Your mercy to display itself in their lives and to comfort and encourage them, to be their strength in weakness. And Father, before we see the outcome, before we see the answer like David, we give You thanks. Thank You for delivering us from all of our distresses, for saving our soul out of all of its sins and for making sure our steps going forward, guaranteed by Your name, O God, and we love You for it. You are who You are, the transcendent, unchanging, invisible, infinite, immutable God, independent in Your power and yet swift to bring mercy to the one who calls upon You in the name of Christ. We do that tonight, Lord, we call upon You through the name of Christ and thank You that in that name, the name above all names, the King of all kings, the Lord of lords, in that name, we are secure and we bless You for all that that means. In Christ's name. Amen.*

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