

## The Christian's Vindication.

Text: Psa 54:1, 2, 5

Suggested Hymns:

802LSB, 486, 492, 350, 372

1) Only through Christ

2) Man is spiritually blind

3) Living The Christians life

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is based on the Introit, Psalm 54:1-2, 5, *Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your strength. <sup>2</sup> Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. <sup>5</sup> He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Professional men in Brazil are known and identified by the stones they wear in their rings. A medical man will have an emerald, a dentist a topaz, a lawyer a ruby, engineers wear sapphires, and commercial men wear pink tourmaline. A Christian is also easily identified, for he is a man of faith and prayer.

Our text is a prayer of David while he was hiding from Saul.<sup>1</sup> The Ziphites had come to Saul to tell him that David was hiding in their land. When David heard of this, he prayed. In his prayer we see *The Christian's Vindication*. Vindication means deliverance or set free. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. We Are Delivered Only Through Christ

Man is vindicated only through Christ, our Lord. Only Jesus can defend us from the accusations of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, the unholy triple alliance. Our spirit may be willing, but our flesh is weak. We fall prey to sin and its evil consequences. Closely observe the alcoholic. Time after time he promises to abstain from drinking, but before long comes the devil, and once again he falls. How weak man is!

If it were not for the Lord, we would have no way out. We cannot escape our enemies. But God through Christ helps us and saves us. For this purpose

our Lord Jesus became man, suffered and died for us, stood in our place, and became our Substitute. The punishment we deserved was directed against Jesus. Like a blotter our Saviour absorbed all our guilt and carried it to the cross.

When Jesus therefore cried out on the cross, "*It is finished!*" our redemption was complete, once for all time. Christ had "done" it for us.

In all things God in Christ is the "Doer," the Author, the Finisher of our faith. Man-made religions lack this element of truth, for they point to man rather than to God. They see in man the ways and means of redemption and so do violence to the Lord's plan.

The true religion is the "done" religion and not the "do" religion. We are not to approach God and ask, "*Lord, what must I do to be saved?*" for Christ has done it for us, He has redeemed us.

But man, left to himself, cannot bring himself to the Lord. Man is incapable of helping himself into heaven. His spiritual blindness, his enmity against God, and his spiritual deadness forms an impenetrable barrier between himself and God. He cannot through his good works, his civil, man-pleasing righteousness, save himself or work his way into heaven.

But thanks be to God that not all is lost. In love the Father sent His Son into the world to save us, and now Father and Son together send the Holy Spirit to us. Through the Word and the Sacraments we are led to God, and saving faith is created in us. Thus the entire God-head, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is active in our behalf. Yes, the Lord is the "Doer."

Our text surely stresses this point. Hear how David cries out to the Lord, *Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your strength.* David pleads as a humble penitent person, trusting in the mercy of the Lord. For fear of his life he had fled before Saul, who sought his life.

Surely in the land of the Ziphites he would find refuge; but how badly mistaken he was! The Ziphites had double-crossed him and told Saul. It was then that David, with his trust and faith in man badly shaken, cried out to the Lord in the loneliness of his soul. He appeals to the mercy of God.

Surely God in His grace would defend and protect him. His words have the ring and finality of complete trust in this mercy of God. *Save me, O God, by*

***Your name.*** This is not the cry of dismal despair. It is the cry of confident trust, hope, and faith. Faith is personal. Five times the psalmist refers to himself, “*save me,*” “*vindicate me,*” “*repay my enemies.*”<sup>2</sup>

We cannot believe for others, for substitution is impossible. Each person must have his own faith. A pious father and mother are no guarantee that we will be saved. Jesus said, “*Your faith has saved you.*”<sup>3</sup> Faith is a personal relationship to God in and through Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore the psalmist cries out, ***Hear my prayer, O God.*** Prayer is not to be mechanical. It must be personal, sincere, honest, and direct. The mechanical prayer wheels of the heathen do not please God. It must be a heart-to-heart talk between the Christian and God in the name of Christ.

Notice how the psalmist also appeals directly to God. David earnestly cries out for the ear of God. True, God is a Spirit and so does not possess the form or shape of man. But who can describe a spirit? Thus God is spoken of in terms of “ears” and “eyes,” because this is how He accommodated Himself to the language of man.

The words of the text can and should be repeated in our own daily lives. We are living in a security-conscious and a security-hungry world. The many fears and tensions of our age are the resultant symptoms of this desire and craving. Many people live in the fear of death.

Unrest in the world is also evidence of widespread fear and tension. We read about nuclear arms, and this strikes terror into the hearts of many. The surprise attacks of terrorism also scares people. The global financial crisis and similar things also take away peoples’ security.

In the final analysis, fear comes into the lives of all of us because we do not listen to the voice of our Lord. We were created to have healthy emotions such as love, sympathy, good will, kindness, and joy.

More than three thousand years ago the holy writer stated in Prov. 17:22, ***A merry heart does good, like medicine.*** Merry means joyful, cheerful, rejoicing, glad, and happy. Today medical science is telling us why this is true!

Faith helps us to overcome destructive emotions. Love and forgiveness heal us because they replace anger and the desire for revenge. Our “old Adam”

passions, wickedness, and sin of all kinds begin to disappear, along with suffering in proportion as we repent, turn away from evil, and seek, with God's help, to follow Him who gave us life and salvation.

David, realised this truth, and many years ago cried out, ***“I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”***<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Man Is Spiritually Blind**

Man, however, in his spiritual blindness and deadness cannot and will not see this truth of God's forgiveness through His Son. Man, in effect, forces the hand of God. And His response is now seen in the judgement of the wicked.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked! How literally these words have been fulfilled through the ages. Why were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? Man, the rebel, had challenged God. Man wanted to play the part of God. So God answered in a swift and decisive manner.

In the Old Testament the barbarous Assyrians became the scourge of the world. True, the Lord used this nation like an anvil on which He destroyed the nations of that day. But when the Assyrians had served the purposes of God, they in turn were also destroyed by Him.

The world-wide Flood in the days of Noah also stands as an object lesson for all time. Sin and corruption had filled the world so much that the Lord God destroyed His work of creation. When man spurns God, he must suffer the terrible consequences.

Even the ancient heathen lost regard for their gods. The ancient Greek statues in existence today have hollow, staring eyes because through the ages the precious stones have been stolen from the eyes of virtually every Greek statue. The gods of the fathers became the victims of less reverent children.

Already in the day of our first parents, Adam and Eve, blood was shed in anger, and blood cried out to God. Since then the shedding of blood, the killing and butchering of man, has continued unabated. Listen to the voice of history!

Attila the Hun destroyed cities, killing thousands in Central Europe between A. D. 433 and 453. Genghis Khan, the Mongolian, with a ghastly record of pillaging, sacking, and mass murder in Asia, in the early 13th century killed 1.6

million in one week in the city of Herat to punish it for overthrowing his governor.

And then there was Tamerlane, the master of genocide, who almost equalled the record of his great-great-grandfather Genghis Khan. Tamerlane ran roughshod in Russia, Persia, and India. On the ruins of Baghdad he erected a pyramid of 90,000 skulls. The list of atrocities goes on throughout history.

The total disregard for religion by many people will eventually bring the terrible punishment of the Lord upon themselves. Even our land is not above the punishment of the Lord. We may sing or pray “God bless Australia,” but then the people live as though there was no God.

Dishonesty and corruption have become the order of the day. Moral decay has set in. Obscenity and immorality characterise our civilisation. Godly marriage is under attack. Divorce rates rise, not to mention the legalisation of same-sex marriages. Surely the Lord knows all this, and just as He punished the countries of old, so surely will come the punishment of the Lord upon our land.

### **3. Living The Christian’s life**

We read in Exodus 20:2, <sup>2</sup> *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.* With these words God introduces the giving of the Ten Commandments. From the Gospel in Genesis He goes to the Law. Even so our text shows us the Father’s heart in Christ, our Lord. He offers us hope, forgiveness, and eternal life. This is now apparent in the Christian’s life.

In the Old Testament we learn that punishment was also given to the innocent party. This form of punishment was the type, where many were being punished for the sin or sins of one person. A family would be punished for the sins of one of its members.

We see an example of this type of punishment in the Book of Joshua, chapter seven. The sons and daughters of Achan were put to death for the sin of the father. No doubt they knew of his sin against the Lord and went along with him in this sin.

The Jews, however, as the chosen people of the Lord, reveal a new type of punishment, an individual suffering for personal guilt. It is unthinkable today to operate under the “*all for one*” type of punishment.

Yet — how interesting! — Christ reverses this type of law and becomes the “ONE for ALL.” He, the Son of God, in His body suffers for the sins of the entire world, past, present, and future.

“*Behold, God is my helper,*” cries out the psalmist.<sup>5</sup> Oh, that the world would open its eyes and observe that it is God who under-girds, protects, and helps! Without this faith in the Lord, man is under the power of the “old Adam.”

But the presence of God in our lives gives life meaning, purpose, and an ultimate goal. And while we speak of the national sins, we must also repent as individuals in order to receive God’s forgiveness and blessings.

Faith does not run to and fro, bewildered and lost and in a state of continual panic. Faith shows and demonstrates itself. Faith becomes articulate in love toward God and his fellow man. Faith, of necessity, is followed by good works.

We read in James 1:22, <sup>22</sup> *But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.* We constantly receive from God, and therefore we are eternally indebted to God. A thankful and grateful heart will, then, express itself. Faith must become active in good works. It must and will produce good works to the glory of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

The early Christians made their faith felt in a loveless world. Even the heathen saw this and were so astounded they had to exclaim, “*How they love one another!*” This was strange to them in their world of hate and revenge.

Hate and revenge are the twin emotions the unbelieving world enjoys. But Christ, our Saviour, through His substitutionary suffering and death on the cross made it possible for the believer to live the life of love and service. At the foot of the cross we see the magnitude of our sins and the terrible price Jesus had to pay for our sins in order to justify us before God. His was not an easy or humane death.

Even though we are justified by Christ and are safe in Christ, nevertheless we are still beset with the triple enemy, the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Therefore the need for the constant cry, *Save me, O God, by Your name,*

*And vindicate me by Your strength.* <sup>2</sup> *Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.* This cry of repentance lays all sins before Jesus and humbly implores God's mercy. He hears the cry of the penitent and for the sake of His Son forgives.

Some fifteen hundred years ago Attila the Hun besieged one city in Italy for three months. When he finally broke into the city, he found to his great amazement that the city was deserted. The people had taken their possessions and moved to the sea, and there in the marshes they had built a new city and named it Venice.

Even so we must also flee from the tempter, the devil. Every day we must come forth and build a new life with the help of our heavenly Father. Daily we must go to Jesus for the enabling strength. Daily we must also implore the help of the Holy Spirit.

Only when our life is lost in Christ in total surrender to His will can we bring forth fruitful lives to His glory. Our life will then take on a character shaped like a cross. Our living will become vertical, upwards to God, and at the same time horizontal, sideways in service to one another. Superimpose one upon the other, and there is visible, the sign of the cross.

May God the Father who created us, may God the Son who redeemed us, may God the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us, create in us this total dependence upon the Lord, the total surrender of self to His will, and the earnest application of Christ to our lives. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 23:19-28; 26:1-25

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 54:5

<sup>3</sup> Luke 7:50

<sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. 24:14

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 54:4