

God Is My Helper

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani preaches on Psalm 54.!

To the choir master with stringed instruments, a mascal of David when the Ziphites went and told Saul, is not David hiding among us? O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

O God, hear my prayer, give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life. They do not set God before themselves.

Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life. He will return the evil to my enemies. In your faithfulness, put an end to them. With a free will offering, I will sacrifice to you.

I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. For he has delivered me from every trouble. And my eye has looked in triumph over my enemies. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

[1:20] Would you please be seated? Amen. The superscription of Psalm 54 points to a moment in David's life when things seemed helpless.

That event is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 23. David is on the run from Saul, the king of Israel. Saul understood that God anointed David as his successor to Israel's throne.

Yet consumed by jealousy and unwilling to surrender his crown, Saul launched multiple attacks on David's life. Despite that, in David's escapes, Saul was determined to find him and to kill him. And that determination only grew. 1 Samuel 23 begins just after David learned that Saul had uncovered Ahimelech's role in aiding his escape.

Ahimelech offered to pray for David. He offered David food, and he furnished him with Goliath's sword as David fled from Saul.

[2:42] When Saul discovered Ahimelech's actions, he summoned the priest, his entire family, and all the priests of the city of Nob before him.

1 Samuel 23 verses 12 through 19 details the tragic events that followed. And Saul said, Then Ahimelech answered the king, And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law and captain over your bodyguard and honored in your house?

Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No. Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.

And the king, Saul, said to him, You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house.

And the king said to the guard who stood about him, Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David.

And they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me. But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg, You turn and strike the priests.

[4:15] And Doeg the Enemite turned and struck down the priests and killed on that day 85 persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey, and sheep he put to the sword.

Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons, escaped the massacre. He found David, and he told David what happened to his father and his family.

In verse 22, David tells Abiathar, I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house. David blames himself for Saul's massacre.

He tells Abiathar to stay with him, and he offers to protect him. After receiving this news, David learns that the Philistines are fighting against the city of Keilah, an Israelite city in the western foothills of Judah.

David was of the tribe of Judah. These were his kinsmen. These were his relatives. And so he inquired of the Lord, asking if he should go and attack the Philistines with his 600 men and rescue the city.

[5:32] God told him to go. Go and save Keilah, which David did. Unfortunately, as a result of that action, Saul found out where David was.

And when David found out that Saul found out where he was, David again inquired of the Lord, asking him if the men of Keilah would surrender him to Saul when he came to the city looking for him.

And God told David, They will surrender you. David risked his life. He risked Saul discovering his location.

He risked the lives of his 600 men to rescue the people of the city of Keilah. Who would in turn cast him out of their city, hand him over to Saul to die.

I can't help but see a foreshadowing of Jesus' life here. Betrayed by the ones he came to save who surrendered him to enemies who forced him outside of the city to die on a cross.

[6:46] But in this moment, David escaped with his men as they journeyed in the Judean wilderness near the town of Ziph. When the Ziphites learned David was hiding out in the vicinity of their town, they chose to report his location to Saul.

1 Samuel 23, 19-20 says, The Ziphites were also David's kin, being of the tribe of Judah.

We can better understand the pressure the men of Keilah were under, which would have prompted them to surrender David. Saul just murdered and destituted an entire city for aiding David and would certainly do the same thing to them.

However, the men of Ziph went to Saul on their own. They went out of their way to betray David. Saul didn't know that David was camped out near their town. They could have stayed silent. They should have protected David, but they chose to betray him instead.

[8:18] David found himself in a helpless place. Those he saved refused to protect him. And even his own relatives who had no quarrel with him betrayed him to Saul, who was determined to take his life.

If you've been betrayed by a family member or by someone who you helped, if you've been rejected by people who should have loved you, if you ever felt like you have no safe place to turn to, you have an idea of how David must have felt in this moment.

Thankfully for you and me, God put David in this situation to teach us a principle, a truth communicated in Psalm 54.

That truth is the main idea for this sermon. When you feel helpless, remember God's promise that he is your helper. When you feel helpless, remember God's promise that he is your helper.

I hate feeling helpless because I don't like asking for help. I don't like asking for help because I don't want to be a burden to others.

[9:40] I don't like asking for help because sometimes asking for help means admitting I've made a mistake. It may mean admitting that I don't know what I'm doing.

I know I could ask for help and there are people who would help me so it's not that I'm truly helpless. Yet there are moments in life when we feel completely powerless.

Like David, sometimes those who we've helped don't come to our aid when we need them most.

People may betray us or turn their backs to us instead of offering help.

They might even side with those who are against us. When we feel helpless like this, we can turn to things that don't truly help.

We can give in to feelings of despair. We can waste today worrying about tomorrow which all our worries have no power to change.

[10:48] We can turn to substances to drown our sorrow and dull our senses, but those things don't truly help. When their effects wear off, we become addicted and enslaved to those things which only adds to our problem and our feeling of helplessness.

When we feel helpless, anger can arise. In an attempt to cope, we may lash out at others.

Oftentimes, we lash out at those who care the most about us and who most want to help us.

Sometimes we even direct our anger toward God, blaming Him for not preventing the hardship that's causing us to feel helpless. And that is most unhelpful because God is the only one capable of providing the help that we most need.

The Lord through David tells us what to do when we feel helpless in this psalm. We turn to the one who has all power and who has promised to be our helper, which is truly an amazing thing as we'll soon see as we go through this psalm.

When you feel helpless, remember God's promise to be your helper. In this psalm, David takes three actions that kept him hopeful in a seemingly helpless situation.

[12 : 21] He reminds himself of God's promise to be his helper and he trusted that if God is your helper, you are never truly helpless. So the first action he takes here is he prays.

When you feel helpless, pray for God's help in vindication. Verses 1 through 3, again, David says, O God, save me by your name and vindicate me by your might.

O God, hear my prayer, give ear to the words of my mouth, for strangers have risen against me. Ruthless men seek my life. They do not set God before themselves. The first thing David did is he prayed.

He could have done something different. He had 600 warriors with him. His army was strong enough to defeat the Philistines so he could have easily raided the city of Ziph and made them pay for their betrayal.

Instead, David brought his trouble to God. He sought salvation in God, not in himself or anyone or anything else. He didn't seek to vindicate himself, but trusted in God's character, which is communicated in God's name.

[13 : 41] When David says, O God, save me by your name, he makes an appeal to God to save him based on his character, which God's name communicates.

In Old Testament times, names and titles had special significance. They often reflected the presence or the character of the person.

God's name communicates the reality of his character and to invoke his name is to invoke his presence. When I was a kid, when my sister and I got a little too rowdy and disobedient, my mom would sometimes say, wait until your father gets home.

That invocation, her calling upon the head of our household, the main authority figure in our home struck a righteous fear in our hearts.

For us, there was a difference between the word father and the word dad. Hey, when we get home, maybe we'll ask dad if we can get some pizza.

[14 : 54] It's different when father comes home. Dad communicated his loving role. Father communicated to us his role as disciplinarian.

Because our father, me and my sister, my sister's father, loved us, he disciplined us. We knew our dad was a good man who would not tolerate or put up with any kind of misbehavior.

And he would justifiably be upset with us for disobeying his wife, our mother. The punishment would fit the crime, but there would be punishment.

So we treated our mom extra specially, very well for the rest of the day until the time dad came home.

The invocation of that name was powerful to change our behavior. David invokes God's name in prayer. He asked God to save him for the sake of God's name.

[15 : 57] That those who have sinned against him would know they have ultimately sinned against God. To understand what David is praying here, we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions.

First, what is God's name? And then second, what does God's name mean? In Exodus chapter 3, this is 400 or 500 years before David's time, God revealed himself to Moses in a burning bush.

He called out to Moses and he commanded Moses to return to Egypt and serve as his instrument through whom he would deliver his people from slavery. But Moses was not eager to accept this assignment because he knew how difficult God's people could be and he had experienced their rejection himself.

Look with me at Exodus 3, 13 through 14. Then Moses said to God, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you and they ask me, what is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

[17 : 17] Our English pronunciation of this ancient Hebrew name revealed to Moses is Yahweh. And when you say it, it mimics the way we breathe, inhaling and exhaling, Yahweh, Yahweh.

This name can be translated I am who I am or I will be what I will be or I am the one who is. Ultimately, God's name speaks of his self-existence.

His self-sufficiency, his eternality, his being the source and sustainer of life in whom all created things derive their existence and have their being.

He owns the air we breathe. It's also important to note that God names himself. When God created Adam, he gave him the job of naming all of the animals.

naming the animals was a sign of his authority over them. No one has authority over God. God names himself.

[18 : 25] His name and his naming himself communicates his ultimate authority. Later in Exodus, after God brought his people out of slavery, Moses asked God to show him his glory.

God says that he will make his goodness pass before Moses and will proclaim his name to Moses as he does so.

In the ESV, when we see capital L-O-R-D and it's in other English translations of the Bible, that is an indicator, those capital letters that in the Hebrew, this is the name of God, the covenant name of God, Yahweh.

Exodus 34, 6-7 records this awesome moment when God descended on Mount Sinai manifesting his presence before Moses as he passed by him declaring his name and what his name means, his character.

Exodus 34, 6-7. So we see it there, the Lord, Yahweh, passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression in sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers of the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

[19 : 59] David knows God's name. He knows God's character which is communicated in God's name. He knows the Lord's called him and anointed him to be Israel's future king.

His prayer is rooted in the reality that God exists, that God is self-sufficient, that God is who he's declared himself to be, that God keeps his promises and none of these things will ever change. the word vindicate in the Hebrew expresses the exercise of judgment all the way from deciding a case to the execution of justice.

David is pleading his case to God the righteous judge, asking him to hear, to give ears to the words of his mouth because as he says in verse 3, strangers have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life, they do not set God before themselves.

In other words, he's saying, God, the people of Keilah, the people of Ziph, Saul who sits on the throne, they are strangers to me.

[21 : 10] They say you are their God. They offer sacrifices to you, but based on their actions, their unjust treatment of me, I know they don't set you before themselves.

They aren't truly following you. They aren't living as if you are the ultimate authority, but in saving me, the one who seeks you, the one who follows you, the one who hasn't sinned against them, they will know who you are.

They'll know what they've done and your name will be exalted in their repentance or in your righteous judgment of their sin. When you've been betrayed, when you've been sinned against, when people you know act like strangers to you and rise up against you, pray.

Pray like David. Pray for God's name to be exalted in your trouble. Pray for vindication, not so that you can boast in yourself telling everyone I was right and you were wrong.

Pray for vindication so God's name will be boasted in. Helpless situations reveal our weakness and those are great moments for God to demonstrate his power in our lives.

[22 : 34] So when you feel helpless, pray and then secondly, when you feel helpless, preach God's word to yourself. Preach God's word to yourself. While we pray and after we pray, we should remember God's promises to be our helper by preaching his word to ourselves.

In verses four through five, David becomes his own preacher, proclaiming truths and realities about God to himself. These truths and realities which God has communicated in his word and he applies them to his present situation.

Verse three says, Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life. Saul had more men than David.

Saul's combustible temper caused people to fear him instead of fearing God. And because they feared Saul instead of God, they sinned instead of doing the right thing.

They sinned and in their sin they were accomplices to Saul's sin. The odds were stacked against David. Saul seems to have more help, a lot more help on his side.

[23 : 51] But David remembers that God is his helper and that's the truth that he preaches to himself. David's life to this point has been like God's sermon.

A good shepherd who risked his life defending his father's sheep against wild animals. A valiant warrior who killed the giant for defying the name of his heavenly father.

father, a future king who risked his life to fight the enemies of God and save his people. David's life is a sermon, a picture, a foreshadowing of a greater shepherd, a greater warrior, a greater king who gave his life to save the lives of God's people.

His name is Jesus. David's trouble served a greater purpose. David experienced God's help when he was winning.

He also experienced God's help when it seemed like he was losing. He escaped Saul's attempts to murder him though his own relatives betrayed him and he had nowhere safe to go.

[25 : 04] He trusted that just as God had helped him in the past so God would continue to be his helper now and into the future. When we think of a helper, think of that word helper.

I think when we think about that word we often think of a sidekick. You know, someone who holds the ladder, someone who holds the flashlight or who goes and fetches the tools to help the person who is doing the work.

At work we think of helpers as assistants. It's the new guy who's learning the ropes. It's the office administrator who irons out all of the details.

People who have maids, butlers, cooks, nannies, chauffeurs, and gardeners often refer to those employees as the help. In our world, in our culture, important people are not helpers, important people have helpers.

So this is an amazing thing. God, our self-existent, self-sufficient, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator, is willing to be called our helper because he wants to help us.

[26 : 32] He lowers himself. He humbles himself to be our helper. helper. As an aside, the same Hebrew word translated for helper here is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 2, 18, when God looked at Adam and he said, it is not good that the man should be alone.

I will make him a helper fit for him. Brothers, sisters, in God's eyes, a helper is not someone who receives a demotion, but someone who shares in his glory.

It's good, it's godly to be a helper, and we would truly be helpless if God didn't help us. Think for a moment about what it means to have God as your helper.

if Warren Buffett helped you with investments, if Albert Einstein helped you with your science project, if Bobby Flay helped you cook dinner, if Shea Gilgis Alexander helped you with your jump shot, if Elon Musk helped you start a business, if the Gettys helped you compose a worship song, if John MacArthur helped you write a Bible lesson, their help would be a lot of help, wouldn't it? These are just people with specific skills and expertise, but God is not just a specialist in certain areas.

[28 : 11] He created the universe, he upholds it with his power. As he says in Isaiah 40, 28, God says, have you not known, have you not heard, the Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. What's even greater, more fantastic is that God has helped us in the way we most need help by becoming a man to serve us. Philippians 2, 4 through 11, let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, of a slave.

Being born in the likeness of men, being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God the Father has highly exalted God the Father sent Jesus, his eternal and divine Son, to serve sinners like you and me by dying in our place for our sins.

Then rising again as the first fruits of what awaits those who have repented of their sin and trusted in him for salvation. And in salvation, we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

[30:04] The Holy Spirit is God with us now, guiding us in truth, guarding us from sin, teaching us God's words which we preach to ourselves as he reminds us that God has helped us and that God will help us.

Our job isn't to return evil with evil but confront sin and compel sinners to repent and turn to Christ in faith. Because one day, as we've read, every knee will bow to Jesus Christ.

Every tongue will confess that he is Lord. No injustice done to us or to any other will go unnoticed or unpunished. If you're saved, Jesus bore your punishment on the cross to save you from the eternal consequences of your sin.

But those who reject Jesus and his salvation will bear the punishment for their sin eternally. In verse 5, David says, he will return evil to my enemies and your faithfulness put an end to them.

Sometimes we see God's justice in this life. Sometimes we have to wait until God judges the souls of men on the last day. But God is a God of justice.

[31:21] We should pray for the salvation of our enemies. We should seek to expose their evil ways and counter their false beliefs with the truth of God's word.

We should warn them against God's wrath towards their sin, but we should never take God's wrath into our own hands.

And you know what? Sometimes when we're in situations like the one David is in, that's the truth we most need to preach to ourselves when we're sinned against.

Restoration is the church's mission, not retribution. The prayer that I pray the most is three words.

God, Lord, help me. Before a hard conversation, Lord, help me. Before a difficult decision that I need to make, Lord, help me.

[32:23] Before I preach, as I stand behind this pulpit, before we open God's word, Lord, help me. When I'm tempted to feel helpless and to quit, Lord, help me.

I pray, Lord, help me, and thus far he has and has given me every reason to believe that he'll continue to help me in ways that convict me of sin, in ways that encourage me to pursue righteousness, in ways that he will be glorified in my weaknesses and I'll know he'll do the same for you.

Lord, help me. Now we come to the third action when we feel helpless. We pray, we preach to ourselves God's word, and now third, we praise God for his deliverance.

We praise God for his deliverance. Verse six says again, with a freewill offering, I will sacrifice to you. I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. David acted as his own preacher in verses four and five, and in verses six through seven, he acts as his own prophet.

David was still in danger, but since he trusted in God, he praises him for a deliverance he had yet to experience, but he believed that he would.

[33:41] David says he is going to make a freewill offering to God. He's going to worship God because God is God, and God is worthy of his worship no matter what his circumstances are.

He didn't use this offering, his praise, and his worship as a bargaining chip. He doesn't say something to God like, you know, God, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you.

Have you ever tried that before? Nobody wants to raise their hand. Maybe you have. God, if you make me famous, I'll make you famous.

God, if you make me rich, I'll make your church rich. God, if you do this for me, I'll go to church every Sunday.

I won't skip anymore. I'll even go to Sunday school. I'll tithe. I promise I'll read my Bible. I'll pray. I'll stop sinning.

[34:44] I'll give you the glory in everything, but only if you first do this for me. me. Psalm 50, verse 12, God says, if I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.

Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and perform your vows to the Most High and call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify me.

Understand this, God doesn't need your fame. He doesn't need your fortune and He does not want your empty praise or religious rituals.

God doesn't need you to make Him who He is. He wants you to know who He is so that you know the purpose for why He made you, to know Him, to delight in knowing Him forever, which is expressed in our worship, our praise, our faith that God is who He says He is, will continue to be who He's revealed Himself to be and will do all the things that He's promised to do in His Word.

But Psalm 50 closes with this warning in verses 22 through 23, Mark this, then you who forget God, lest I tear you apart and there be none to deliver.

[36:16] The one who offers thanksgiving as His sacrifice glorifies me. To one who orders His way rightly, I will show the salvation of God. When you feel helpless, pray to God for His help.

Preach God's Word to yourself. Remember all the ways He's helped His people in Scripture, all the ways that He's helped you, and praise God because even if your helpless situation were to result in your death, you will be with Him eternally.

You will no longer suffer the trouble of this sin-cursed world. David believed what God said. God's prophet Samuel had said to him in his past that he would be king.

Jonathan, Saul's son, and David's best friend came to him in this moment where he was hiding in the wilderness of Ziph and reminded him of God's promise that he will be king.

David will be king. If God said that he would be king, David knew that he would be king despite his circumstances, despite his helpless situation.

[37:32] Now look, God hasn't promised us that we will be kings in this world or queens, but He has promised us that we will reign with Jesus in the world to come. Revelation 22 describes the new eternal city we will one day inhabit with Jesus.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more.

They will need no night or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Hold on to the promises of God.

Your situation may be hard. It may be life-threatening, but God has promised to help you. We've read that in Psalm 54.

He has promised to complete the work He began in you when He saved you. We read that in Philippians 1:6. He's promised to prepare a place for you in His eternal kingdom, John 14:3.

[38:47] He's promised to never leave you or forsake you, Hebrews 13:5. He's promised that nothing will separate you from His love, Romans 8, 37-39.

He has promised and has given us His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to be our helper, John 14, 15-17.

So believe Him, trust Him, have faith. He'll help you. So how do we adjust to what we've just heard? Well, pretty simple. Pray, preach, praise. When you feel helpless, pray. Ask for God's help. When you feel helpless, preach God's word to yourself.

Remind yourself of the promises that God has given to you and apply those promises to your present situation. And then third, praise. Praise God for the future deliverance that He has promised to you, that He works all things together for the good.

[39:56] And I would say to you, brothers, sisters, do these things all the time. not just when you feel helpless. We should always be praying to God, preaching His word to ourselves and praising Him because He's worthy.

And you know, being a Christian means acknowledging your need for God's help. You can't be a follower of Christ without first having asked for His help.

And maybe that describes you this morning. You don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, but He's brought you here to hear this message and I hope that you know and you've heard from His word your desperate need for His help.

We've all sinned. We've all fallen short of God's standard of holiness. We all need Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, to live the sinless life that we could not live, to defeat the enemies that we could not defeat, to be our good shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep.

We all need Jesus' help. And if you don't know Jesus, He's brought you here to hear this word, you need His help. Ask Him for help. Ask Him to save you.

[41:07] Repent of your sins and turn to Him and you will be saved. You'll receive His help in salvation. You'll receive His help for the rest of your life. It is good to know Jesus.

Call out to Him and He will help you. There are people in this church I often call for help. If it's an air conditioning problem, a washer and a dryer, a car problem, you guys know who you are.

I call you for your help. And you answer my call. And you're willing to help. You know, there's sometimes when I think, you know, I'm going to be calling and asking for help, they're probably going to see Pastor Mike on their caller ID and be like, oh gosh, he just needs more help.

But they answer the phone and they're willing to help. You know what, I'm 43 years old and I still call my parents when I need help. Whenever I need help with a decision, whenever I just need them to pray or whatever it is, I call them and when, same thing, when they see the caller ID, they're like, oh my goodness, our 43 year old son, is calling us again for help.

They answer the phone and they help me. Brothers, sisters, friends, it's no different with God. You call out to him for help and it's not like he's going to be like, man, this person always needs my help. [42 : 44] He wants to help you because he loves you, because he cares for you. And he wants you to trust. Call out to him for help.

Psalms 138.3 is the text we'll close on this morning with this truth. On the day I called, God, you answered me.

My strength of soul, you increased. Let's pray. Lord, thank you that you are our helper.

Lord, we need a lot of help. And you provide it. In our times when we feel helpless, when our circumstances just seem to be too great for us and we feel powerless,!

you've given us your word, which communicates to us who you are, the character that you have, love, and your willingness to be our helper.

[43 : 53] God, you know everybody in this room, you know everybody who's listening to this message, you know their name, you know their situation, you know their need, and I pray, Lord, that they would call out to you for help, that you would help them, and that you would be glorified in doing it.

And Lord, as your body, as your church, I pray that we would follow your example, that we would be willing to help one another, whatever the situation may be, whether it's a physical matter or a spiritual matter, that we would answer the call when we are asked to help, and that we do it for your glory because it's good, and it's good for us to be like you, and we are like you when we're willing to help.

So, Father, we pray that you would be glorified in our lives. Lord, we look forward to our future deliverance from this sin-cursed world, and until that day, we pray that we would make much of the name of Jesus, that we would share the good news of who he is, in the hopes that more would be saved and helped by you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.