

Psalm 54: Animal Sacrifice



Psalm 54 (53) (Mode 3. 3....12 / 4.....271)

This is a psalm of supplication (verse 2), composed in a traditional style and with little poetic inspiration.

The psalmist appeals to the divine tribunal for the justice that his enemies are denying him. He appeals to God's reputation as a just judge, to God's ultimate authority and faithfulness.

The Fathers associate this prayer with Jesus facing his death but trusting in God to vindicate him.

O God, judge in my favour.

Use your power to save.

Hear my prayer, O God,
be attentive to my words.

For the insolent rise up
determined to destroy me.

The ruthless seek my life.

They have no regard for God.

Surely, God is my helper;
the Lord sustains my life.

These lines are not in the liturgy liturgy.

The evil my enemies carry out
will recoil on their own heads.
In your faithfulness,
put a stop to them.

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous”’(Matthew 5:43-45).

Pontifical Biblical Commission

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993)

‘There is mutual illumination and a progress that is dialectic: what becomes clear is that Scripture reveals the meaning of events and that events reveal the meaning of Scripture, that is, they require that certain aspects of the received interpretation be set aside and a new interpretation adopted’(pages 91-92).

‘The exegete need not put absolute value in something which simply reflects limited human understanding’(page 94).

Pontifical Biblical Commission

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993)

‘The Word of God finds expression in the work of human authors. The thought and the words belong at one and the same time both to God and to human beings, in such a way that the whole Bible comes at once from God and from the inspired human author. This does not mean, however, that God has given the historical conditioning of the message a value which is absolute’(page 113).

Pontifical Biblical Commission

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993)

‘Addressing men and women, from the beginnings of the Old Testament onward, God made use of all the possibilities of human language, while at the same time accepting that his word be subject to the constraints caused by the limitations of this language. Proper respect for inspired Scripture requires undertaking all the labours necessary to gain a thorough grasp of its meaning’ (page 133).

With a free heart
I will sacrifice to you.

A 'freewill offering' [נְדָבָה] is one freely offered by someone outside the regular sacrificial system required by law.

I will give thanks to you, Lord,
for you are good.

You have rescued me from every danger.
I have seen the downfall of my foes.

‘O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. But you, O Lord, are a God tenderly compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving girl. Show me a sign of your favour, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame, because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me’(Psalm 86:14-17).