

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 26

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 26

Overview

Psalm 26 has been seen as an *entrance liturgy* in one who approaches the temple. This is easy to see as we hear David proclaim his innocence before coming to that place of arrival at the temple in 26:8, “*O Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.*” It has also been seen as a psalm of prayer for continued innocence. While there is no way to state for certain that the psalm is intended for either use as an entrance liturgy or as a proclamation of innocence, there is no reason not to hold both in view as we read the psalm.

It is imperative that as we hear David proclaim his innocence that we not imagine that he thinks of himself as sinless. As we come to the end of the psalm, David shows us his need for redemption in verse 11 and therefore does not consider himself sinless. What we truly hear in the psalm is one who is faithful longing to maintain that faithfulness to God.

Outline/Structure

- I. David states his case – 26:1
- II. David presents his evidence – 26:2-5
- III. David prepares for worship – 26:6-8
- IV. David is not associated with evildoers – 26:9-10
- V. David restates his case – 26:11-12

David States His Case – 26:1

- :1 - David makes the case of his innocence and integrity. It could very well be that others have made accusations against him and he is calling on God to clear (vindicate) his name. While we must be careful not to think of David as sinless, it is possible that David is taking a more general view of his faithfulness to God as opposed to the others around him. (*note especially verses 4-5,9*)
- “walking with integrity” – This is a biblical idiom for faithfulness not a claim of perfection. ***Read 2 Samuel 15:11; 1 Kings 9:4*** This phrase also

serves as a bookend to the psalm. We receive the restatement of this thesis again in 26:11.

David Presents His Evidence – 26:2-5

- :2 - There are three words used in this verse that are all translated as “test” or “try”. Yet, there is a difference in the Hebrew of the last of the three from the other two. The first two ask for examination. Essentially, look at me, O Lord, and the way that I am living out my faithfulness. The third word however is the word used for testing that comes by fire. Like metal put through a smelter. It is an invitation not just for examination by the Lord, but for purification. Essentially, O Lord, take whatever dross of sin remains in me and filter it out.
- David draws God to examine and purify his inner self, his mind and heart. (Remember that the seat of emotions in the Hebrew was the kidneys and that is the word used in this verse.)

Why does David want God to purify him from the inside out?

Read Matthew 15:18-19

How does Jesus demonstrate that sin begins within?

- :3 - Notice that David gives the reason for his faithfulness and obedience in this verse. His faithfulness is brought about by the “lovingkindness” of God. Even here in the Old Testament the proper order of sanctification is kept. We are forgiven by grace(lovingkindness) and our obedience to the will of God is a thankful response to that brought about by the Holy Spirit.

What is the danger of messing up the proper understanding of sanctification?

- :4-5 - “You are judged by the company you keep.” As familiar as that saying is, it isn’t a bible verse. Nevertheless, the sentiment of the saying is found throughout the Scripture. Who we associate with and spend time with will most definitely affect our faith and how we are perceived.

Read Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Psalm 1:1

How does associating with bad company affect the way we are perceived by others? Why is that important?

How does continuously associating with people of questionable morals affect us?

How do we balance the need to be among sinners as Jesus was with the need to keep ourselves from being drawn into their life choices?

David Prepares for Worship – 26:6-8

- :6 - God had commanded that Aaron and his sons wash their hands before approaching the altar of God. **Read Exodus 30:19,20.** This was accomplished through the basin that God had commanded to be built in the temple area and it was known as a *laver*. While the washing of hands by the priests approaching the altar was an act of obedience to the Word of God, there are also instances where the washing of hands is symbolic.

Read Deuteronomy 21:6-7; Matthew 27:24

Are there gestures or postures that we make in worship that are merely symbolic?

- The washing of hands is an important part of the modern day Jewish festival known as Sukkot, which are the 5 days after Yom Kippur. Sukkot is equivalent to the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles remembering how God sustained Israel in tents after they left Egypt. There is a blessing spoken on the washing of hands as remembrance of God's command:

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al netilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding washing the hands.

- :7 - Already here in the Old Testament worship is centered around telling, proclaiming, and giving thanks for the things that God has done. The feasts, calendar year, and worship of Israel were all determined by the mighty works of the Lord. Likewise the Christian church year with its feasts and worship is set upon the mighty acts of God done in Jesus Christ's life. (**See the diagram of the church year at the end of the lesson**)

- :8 - Here the house must be understood to be the temple because it is described as "the place where your glory dwells". **Read Exodus 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-13.** To be near the temple was to be near the place of God's immediate presence, His *cabod* (glory).

- This verse is used in the Order of Matins (LSB page 221) for the Common Responsory to the reading of the Scriptures.

What do you love most about being in the "house of the Lord" for worship?

How is the presence of God different in the worship assembly than in the rest of your life?

David is Not Associated With Evildoers – 26:9-10

:9-10 – These verses narrow the focus from general sin to three specific categories of sin. The three categories are:

1. Murder – “men of bloodshed” - :9
2. Sexual sin – “wicked scheme” - :10 – This is the Hebrew word normally associated with lewdness as in *Leviticus 18:17*
3. Sins of property – “bribes” - :10

What is the value of sermons that focus on specific sins? What is the danger of them?

David Restates His Case – 26:11-12

:11 - This is the back end of the bookends of the psalm and notice that the order is reversed from verse 1:

:1 - “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have *walked in my integrity.*”

:11 - “I shall *walk in my integrity*, redeem me.”

- This is a literary device and may indicate that the psalm was actually used in worship. Also David’s acknowledgment for the need to be redeemed demonstrates that although he points at his integrity, he doesn’t see it as complete and perfect.

:12 - The overall effect of David’s faith is steadiness, his feet are on a level place. It seems to me that is a wonderful image for the Christian. We are not perfect in this life, but we are always on a steady foundation of forgiveness and eternal life.

Summary

Psalm 26 presents David as he approaches the house of the Lord. Like David, we must live in a world filled with sinners and those bent on sinning, but we must remain faithful with our feet on the steady ground of forgiveness given because of Christ. This is the very reason we love the habitation of God’s house for there forgiveness is given and received.

Closing Prayer

The Liturgical Year

