

Psalm 26

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[0:00] A lot easier to understand how David may be feeling in those situations.! There are some suggestions of what the context would be, although we don't know for sure.

But I wanted to read a short passage from 2 Samuel, and this is one idea of what the context for this psalm might be. But I think even if this isn't the context, it still serves as a good picture of how David may have been feeling when he wrote this psalm.

It may be a similar situation. But this is 2 Samuel chapter 4, and that is on page 308 in my Bible. 2 Samuel chapter 4.

And this is after the death of Saul. Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, was raised up as king in the northern kingdom and was a rival king to David.

And I'm going to start reading from verse 4. Sorry, verse 5. Now, Rechab and Banah, the sons of Rimmon, the Berethite, set out for the house of Ish-bosheth.

[1:38] And they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest. They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and his brother, Banah, slipped away.

They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head, taking it with them. They travelled all night by the way of Arabah. They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life.

This day the Lord has avenged my lord, the king against Saul and his offspring. David answered Rechab and his brother, Banah, the sons of Rimmon, the Berethite.

As surely as the Lord lives who has delivered me out of all trouble, when a man told me Saul is dead and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag.

[2:43] That was the reward I gave him for the news. How much more when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own home and on his own bed. Should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you?

So here the son of Saul, Ish-bosheth, David's rival in the northern kingdom, has been killed and his head has been brought to David. Almost as a prize.

And in that situation, David is very clear that he wants no association with these men. He's condemning them. And he doesn't want anybody to think that he is part of their sinful activities.

He was very clear that he wouldn't lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. He said that he had opportunity to kill Saul and try and seize the throne. But he didn't take that opportunity.

He waited for the Lord's timing for God to raise him up when it was the right time. So that may be the context for this psalm.

[3:53] I think certainly that's the kind of thing that we can have in mind, that David is accused of something and wants the Lord to vindicate him, wants the Lord to judge him and look at his life and see that he's innocent.

So I think as we look at this, we shouldn't see it in an absolute sense that David is saying that I'm always like this. I always have been.

And I want God to judge me as an innocent man. But more that in this situation, in this context, David is saying, God, look at my life.

Look at the way I behave and the things I do and judge me in this situation. But we can read this and we can say that this does apply fully and absolutely to the Lord Jesus.

And I think we also, as we look at this, I want to look at how this applies through Christ. And I think in the light of what we know in the New Testament, we can say that this is a prophetic psalm looking forward to its fulfillment in Christ.

[5:07] So there's three themes in this psalm I want to look at. I want to look at God as a judge from the first verse when he says, vindicate me, O Lord.

David is asking God to be a judge for him and to judge his life. I want to look at holy living and the way that David describes himself in his innocence, in his integrity.

And I want to look at David's response of worship to the Lord. So first of all, God as a judge.

So he says here, vindicate me, O Lord. We can learn from this that whatever the situation that we're facing, whatever accusations come against us, God's opinion far outweighs that of the people around us.

If God clears us, if God declares us innocent, then we are innocent and what people around us say doesn't matter. And there is obviously a place for giving reasons and evidence for our innocence in different situations.

[6:30] But most importantly, what does God think and what does God have to say about our actions and our behaviors? God is a judge and his approval is worth everything.

And here he says, test me, O Lord, and try me. Examine my heart and my mind. So David is asking God to look inside him, to look in his heart, to look in his mind.

So it's not just look at all the things I've done, look at the way I behave. He's asking to look at his heart, his thoughts, his desires, and the things which we can hide from other people.

Or we can't hide from God. And this could be a frightening and an encouraging thought. It could be frightening for us because nothing is hidden from God. There is nothing that we can hide, all the deepest, darkest desires that we have, the things that we would never speak of.

God can see all of that. And it's frightening because we know that God judges all sin, that God is a just God. And I just wanted to turn to Exodus 34.

[7:41] This is on page 92, page 93. I wanted to read a short passage there, Exodus 34, verses 4 to 8.

So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets, like the first ones that went up Mount Sinai earlier that morning, in the morning. As the Lord had commanded him, and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.

Then the Lord came down in the cloud, stood there with him, and proclaimed his name, the Lord.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. So we see that God is loving, God is gracious, God is forgiving.

This is David's God, but he is a just God, and all sin must be paid for. And that can be frightening, that we have this God as a judge.

[9:00] But the comfort in that is that Christ came, and he lived that perfect life that we couldn't live. And because God can see everything, he can see inside, he can see in our hearts and our minds, then he knows that Christ was the perfect, the pure sacrifice, the sacrifice we needed for our sin.

And to know that he is faithful and just to forgive us, as it says in 1 John. If the sacrifice is perfect, then we know our forgiveness is ultimate, and it's not based on our obedience, it's not based on our works, or any money we give to the church, or prayers we paid, or the repentance that we come to God with.

None of that has any impact on the work of the atonement. That work is complete, it is perfect, and it's all on Jesus.

And if our faith is in Jesus, then our sin is paid for, the sin of our past, and the sin of our future. He's a perfect judge who doesn't get resentful or cynical, doesn't get tired and impatient of us in our failures.

If we are trusting in him and put our faith in him, then God, he's our judge, and he's forgiven us and accounted Christ's righteousness to our account.

[10:31] So he's a good judge. He's a judge who makes a way for sinners to be able to have a restored relationship with God.

And there's a hymn that says, Wonderful grace that gives what I don't deserve, pays me what Christ has earned and lets me go free. Wonderful grace that gives me the time to change, washes away the stains that once covered me.

So this is amazing, just and loving and gracious God. And the second thing I wanted to look at was living a holy life.

And David's description of his life in this situation, in the context of this, he says, Test me and try me, examine my heart and mind.

He says, Your love is ever before me. I walk continually in your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I bore the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

[11:38] So David is living a life of faith. He's trying to walk with the Lord, keeping himself away from associating with evil people and people who are going to be a bad influence maybe on his life.

So the thing that David has his eyes fixed on is the steadfast love of the Lord. Verse 3 says, For your love is ever before me. The love of God, the faithful covenant love of God is always before him.

And this is a big part of his motivation. Everything we do has a motivation behind it, something that motivates us to do it. We don't just do things.

Sometimes we do things because we are too lazy to do anything else. But that's still a motivation.

There's times when we will not read our Bible and pray very much because we're not motivated to do it.

Basically because we don't believe that God will speak to us through his word and we don't believe he will answer our prayers. So we don't do it. And there are other times when we do.

[12:55] We do read and we do pray and we have a close walk because we know that there is benefit, there is fruit, and there is a real living God answering us. So it's his motivation to drive us in his faith.

But David's motivation here is the steadfast love of the Lord. He says, So if we don't have a clear focus on God, on God's love in our life, then we're going to struggle to move forward in our faith.

We need to have that clear picture of God's love for us as a starting point. And David says here that he lives a life separate from evil men.

There should be a clear difference between our life and the lives of people in the world. We should be living in a way where we can be salt and we can be light to the people around us.

And again, we see Jesus as the best example of this. He was completely perfect, completely pure, no sin at all in him. And yet he was accused of getting too involved with the sinners in Jerusalem and spending time with tax collectors.

[14:17] And I think it's important to follow that example that we can really spend time and be close with the people around us in our workplace or at university or wherever we are.

There are always people around us who don't know Christ. And we don't need to avoid those people. We need to get involved and live different lives around them. Sometimes there are people in our lives who do lead us astray because of our own sin and weaknesses.

And it takes wisdom to know when we do need to draw away from people. But the pattern generally is that we follow Jesus and we act as a witness.

But we don't fall into temptation by God's grace. As David says, we do not sit with deceitful men.

So we don't join in with their deceitful activities. We don't consort with hypocrites. We don't get involved in their hypocrisy.

[15:30] So we need to spend time in the word and prayer. We need to be working to have this steadfast love before us. And we need to be motivated by that.

And we should have an expectation that God will work in our lives and have faith. And we need to live that life in front of other people, the people that we know, the people around us.

Thirdly, I wanted to look at worship. So in this chapter, David has summed up his life quite briefly. He says, God, search me.

Look at me inside and out. Look at my deeds. Look at the people I spend my time with. Look at the things I do. And then he says, look how I worship you. He says, I wash my hands in innocence and go about your altar, O Lord.

Proclaiming aloud your praise. Telling of your wonderful deeds. I love the house where you live, O Lord. The place where your glory dwells. And worship isn't a means to an end like some of the other things that he mentions about the way he lives a life away from evil men.

[16:55] The purpose of that is to keep himself pure. Things like reading the Bible, we do that so we can understand God. But worship is not a means to something else.

It's an end in itself. We worship because God deserves worship. And that is enough. That is the end result of it. And worship isn't for anything except to give glory which is due to God.

And to satisfy our hearts. This is what we've been created for. We've been created to worship God. And it's important that we are satisfied by God through worship. And God deserves to be worship. He is worthy of it. And works without worship is like a musical instrument that's never played. You may know that the instrument sounds good.

And it may be made of quality materials and well made. But unless it's played, all it is is wood and metal and strings.

[18:01] And it's never fully realized as to what it should be. And I heard a quote from John Piper recently. It says, Satan is happy to see our outward actions improve as long as our hearts remain satisfied in anything but God.

And that's a very challenging thing. Anything outward that we do, doesn't matter how good it is. Unless we are satisfied in God.

Unless our hearts are worshiping God. It's just an activity. And works without worship is empty. If you take the worship out of this psalm. If we look to this psalm and we took out the verses in verse 3. And then verses 6 to 8 about David wanting to worship God.

Then what we have is something which is a lot more like Luke 18, 11. Where it says, The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I'm not like the other people. Robbers, evildoers, adulterers.

[19:07] Or even like this tax collector. And that is the man that is condemned. While the tax collector is commended for his prayer.

So, in all the things that David was doing. It had to be framed in a life of worship.

David didn't include worship as part of his plea. Then I think his argument would have fallen apart quite quickly. His heart had to be in submission to God. And I think what this looks like through the life of Jesus.

Is we see that here David is saying that he proclaims aloud. Your praise. Telling of all your wonderful deeds.

And if we turn back to Psalm 22. Just across the page. Psalm 22, verse 22. It says, I will declare your name to my brothers in the congregation.

[20:18] I will praise you. Now this verse is quoted in Hebrews 2. And is accounted to Jesus. And so, you know that this is Jesus.

Prophetically, this is Jesus saying, I will declare your name to my brothers. Which is you and me. In the congregation, I will praise you. So, it's amazing that Jesus, who is God.

Who is equal with God. He's singing praises to God. Among us. Because that is something, a reality.

Which we are going to experience in heaven. And we need to step back and be amazed. That Jesus is going to lead the singing. In the great assembly in heaven. And we have to put our trust in Jesus.

Sorry, we who have put our trust in Jesus now. Are children of God. And we're no less responsible to worship God now. Than we are when we're in heaven.

[21:23] So, I think right now. I think rather than challenging ourselves. On whether we are worshipping God in the right way. I think we should spend our time.

To turn our eyes away from ourselves. And to look to the steadfast love of God. And if we're trusting in Christ for our salvation. Then we can say. As it says in verse 12.

My feet stand on level ground. In the great assembly. I will praise the Lord. And that will be true. If we put our trust in Jesus.

Then we will praise the Lord. With Jesus in the great assembly. So, I think now would be a good time. If I pass back to Ben. And we'll close by singing.

Our final hymns. Let's go.