

Vindicate that I am yours

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[0 : 00] Reading Psalm 26 today. And go around your altar, O Lord, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud and telling all your wondrous deeds.

O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands are evil devices and whose right hands are full of bribes.

But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity. Redeem me and be gracious to me. For my foot stands on level ground. In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord. Well, good morning, everyone.

My name is Dave. Welcome if you're visiting. Really hope you can stay for lunch after the service. Well, why don't we pray as we come to God's word.

Let's pray together. Father, if we take this psalm seriously, we can struggle to think that we're allowed to pray this psalm from our own lips.

[1 : 46] And so I ask for your spirit's help in understanding why you've given us this psalm to pray to you. And I pray that you would fill us all, all of your people, with confidence to pray this to you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, let's say a woman wants to leave church as soon as the formal service is over because those she once trusted and called friends, she finds out are gossiping untrue things about her past.

She just wants to get out of here each week as soon as she can. A couple who've been in the church for years find out through social media that everyone in their peer group were invited to this social gathering.

Everyone, not just a few, just except for them. A man decides to live stream church because he fears showing up because he's pretty sure that anyone who sees him is going to see right through him that he's had a horrible week with his lust.

He just doesn't want to show his face. A teenager, even the song we just sang, feels just hypocritical taking those words on their lips.

[3 : 18] Just the expression of absolute faith with the emotion. They feel unworthy. They're more sure of God's rejection than his embrace. There are so many things.

These are just a few examples, I think. There are so many things that can threaten us to make us feel like I'm not the Lord's or I'm not fully, I'm not fully part of the Lord's people.

From false accusation to being socially not treated as one of God's people.

From the internal shame of true accusations or just a pervasive fear that the great promises of God can't be for me.

They're for others but not for me. And many believers through history, they have been executed in the name of God, being excluded, cut off from God's people.

[4 : 21] I think of William Tyndale in the Reformation who paved the way, pioneered the way for us to be reading God's word in English today. Hunted by the church authorities of the time.

And at age 42, I won't describe how, given the kids in the room, but executed. Certainly he could pray in that moment his dying breath, vindicate me, O Lord.

Vindicate me. I think this longing for vindication is pretty deep in us. We want to be publicly recognised that I am the Lord's, I fully belong.

I'm not on the fringe, I'm in the core. Not that there is a fringe in the core, but we feel like there is a fringe in the core. Well, I think this is, it's a universal desire for vindication, isn't it?

Like, it seems to be human nature. People spend so much money and so much of their lives in court to clear their name. Like, people bring up in conversation as often as they can past hurts to try and vindicate.

[5 : 43] Vindication of, you should accept me. It's really core to us as people, I think. Psalm 26, I think it offers us a different pathway to vindication than grasping at vindication ourselves.

It's, don't go down the path of putting on a mask of religious observance. Make sure the mask is thick enough so that it covers any sense of guilt for particular sins or lack of assurance.

Don't just try and work harder to cover that. Don't rally people around you into your corner to get those with influence on your side to try and get vindication.

Psalm 26 says, it gives us words to pray. Don't try and grasp at ourselves or put our trust in people ultimately, but pray and wait for the Lord.

Don't try and wait for the Lord.

[7 : 16] When I'm standing there in the great multitude praising him, those threats are gone. I am knowing the Lord's unreserved embrace. Internally, there will be no more doubts or fear or shame.

Publicly treated, welcomed as a full member of that worshipping community. I think vindication is part of our Christian hope. We talk a lot about the restoration of our bodies, but that vindication is going to be good.

Right now, we're plagued by accusation inside and out. We may not always feel this, but I don't think you can get through life without sometimes feeling this pretty deeply.

So we need Psalm 26. God has given us Psalm 26 to put in our lips to pray back to him.

So have a look with me if you've got a Bible or just listen along. Verses 1 to 3. This is the fundamental grounds of King David's appeal.

[8 : 24] I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering, without my foot slipping.

And then he invites the Lord, look inside. Look at the thoughts of my mind and the desires and the will of my heart. Prove me.

Test me. Refine me. When you do, Lord, you're going to see a direct correlation at the core of my being with how I'm trying to live.

You're going to see wholeness. Not pretense, but wholeness. Integrity is about wholeness. Does that fill you with confidence to pray this?

Who can possibly pray this Psalm? Lord, look inside at my core. See that it's sincere.

[9 : 33] These prayers and songs are given to us to speak to God, and yet I don't feel like I'm one of the righteous with David. But have a look at what is the essence of David's integrity.

What is he saying is at his core? Verse 3. It's the steadfast love. It's the Lord's promise-keeping nature.

That's his name. It's the Lord. It's his faithfulness that's at his core. Integrity isn't appealing to perfection.

It's not saying pure. Otherwise, none of us. David couldn't have prayed this. He's saying, Lord, your steadfast love, your faithfulness is at the core of my being.

I can't get away from it. I don't want to. I think we see five marks of the Lord's steadfast love being at the core of David's being.

[10 : 46] I hope going through this, by the end, it helps you take this psalm and take many of the psalms on your lips.

So let's have a look at these five marks. So sincerity, integrity in the steadfast love of the Lord.

Well, if first, I don't know if it's first, but one of the marks is that it willingly bears the cost of not belonging. Not to the church, but not belonging to the world and hypocritical religion.

There's a real cost. Let's imagine someone plagued by shame in their lust. They're feeling ashamed right now, sitting in church of their lust.

But they can look at our society, which just wants to eradicate all social norms about what's sexually right, and just look at that society and go, I don't belong.

[11 : 56] I can't value that. I can't agree with that. Despite my guilt, even because of my convicted conscience, I don't belong to that.

I can't accept the falsehood about God that would permit me to live and even embrace that kind of behaviour. There's a cost to allegiance to the Lord.

Even because of my convicted conscience, I can look at other society not based on God. I can't go there either. I don't belong.

In a strange way, the assembly, the gathering of people who don't have the steadfast love of the Lord before their eyes, it shines this contrasting light on those who do.

Now, I don't think this is saying we can't eat dinner with such people.

[13:02] Jesus was called friend of sinners. We should accept invitations. This is not about socialising. This is about allegiance. I don't feel at home in the world.

People who just attend church and don't care about their lust the rest of the week, that hypocritical religion, I can't do that.

It shows a spiritual allegiance. I don't belong to the world. I don't belong to hypocritical religion.

In a strange way, that helps to see. The steadfast love of the Lord is at my core. I don't belong.

And I bear the painful marks in career and friends and family who cut you off. That's the first mark. I don't belong.

[14:08] The second mark is repentance. I think in verse 6 to 8, we should be picturing the tabernacle. Picture the inner court of the tabernacle.

You've got the altar for sacrifices for sin. Then you've got the wash basin. And then you've got the tent of meeting to be in God's presence. And when you read the laws of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, there's a lot of joy in there.

Verse 6, I wash my hands. I think we're meant to be picturing that wash basin. I wash my hands in innocence and I go around your altar, O Lord.

Integrity is not claiming perfection. It requires openly confessing known sins and failures.

And the previous psalm, verse 11 of chapter 25, David prays, Pardon my guilt for it is great.

[15:13] The claim to integrity is not saying perfection. It's saying, I love your altar. I love your provision of cleansing.

Psalm 32 is even more clear by David. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. Whose sin is covered. It was when David tried to hide his sin that he was tormented inside.

But once he confessed it, Oh, the peace and joy that came through the means God has given to cleanse him. Someone with a steadfast love of the Lord repents and they rejoice.

They give thanksgiving. Thank you for washing me for your atonement. Hypocritical religion wants the spotlight to be on my wondrous deeds.

But true religion will openly confess and repent because you want the spotlight to be on his wondrous deeds. And part of that is his provision for washing.

[16:32] So another mark of David's integrity that he's claiming for is repentance. I love washing in your atonement.

I don't belong to the world. Repentance. And third, David looks to the Lord for rescue. That the Lord is his refuge.

Verse 11. Redeem me. Be gracious to me. Where do you go when you're under threat?

Who do you look to for safety? Now, David was a warrior. He had a lot of battles under his belt.

He was no chicken. He had courage. But we don't see him here fighting for control. Whatever's going on, we're not told the exact situation. But he's not fighting for control.

[17:44] We don't see him politically amassing people into his corner. He could have done that. He was quite popular in his day. But he does something much more wise.

He cries to the one who can bring true and lasting vindication, and he waits. Redeem me. You're my refuge.

When false accusation and gossip makes every fibre of your being, just want to defend yourself.

When the steadfast love of the Lord is at your core, you do want to defend yourself. You really hope people will come to your aid, but ultimately you know that the Lord's the only place to go.

He's your safety. He's your refuge. He's your rescue. That's a mark that the Lord's at your core.

[18:50] Not belonging to the world, repentance, the Lord's rescue and refuge.

And the fourth mark we see here is his daily walk, that if the steadfast love of the Lord is at your core, it's got to impact your daily walk.

David can't be around hypocritical worship. He's not going to be one thing in private and in public worship and then accepting bribes and perverting justice in his business deals or whatever else.

He can't do that. If you were caught, I'll give you another example. If you were caught as a witness in court, I'm not sure if they still do this, but anyway, a lawyer can correct me after this, but let's say you're given the option to give a vow.

I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls his people to always, in every situation, in every conversation, whether in private with family or in public, whether in person or online, around

the dinner table or in court, you're in the presence of Almighty God.

[20 : 22] You might be more careful in court because the consequences are pretty high, but the Lord's presence is constant.

That vow almost doesn't make a difference. Now, I'm guessing if you're like me, that's probably convicting your conscience.

I'm hoping it's convicting our conscience. And we go back to that wash basin. I love your altar. I love your wash basin. But a mark of God's being at your core is, it's got to impact daily life.

You can't just push him out because he's present. You can't switch God off. You don't want to. It might convict you of sin, but you don't want to switch God off.

It affects his walk. Not perfection, remember, but it really does impact his daily walk.

[21 : 28] So fifth and finally, not belonging to the world, we've got repentance. The Lord is his rescue. We've got his daily walk. And I think the final mark we see here is that the Lord's at his core.

It affects his greatest desire and his delight. Let's imagine that he prayed this when Saul was hunting him.

Now, what is the main thing that he would want? A cleared name? Safety? Inner peace?

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with these desires, but we see his ultimate desire at the end of verse 12. In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord.

God's at the center of his greatest desire. Look at verse 8. Look at what he loves. Look at what he delights in. Oh Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

[22 : 40] He's picturing the tabernacle. He's picturing the community who are focused on God. That is his delight. He wants to be there.

That's his greatest desire in the end. In our day, I think we should be picturing Christ, where God's glory dwells.

The assembly of people who worship Christ. I love your house. I want to be part of that great assembly in the end.

That's my greatest desire. Yes, I want a cleared name. I want that sense of safety, but he's central to my greatest desire.

A pastor once visited a man who hadn't been to church in a while and apparently while they were sitting by the fire, a coal rolled out and after burning a bit, it went out or got cold and he picked it up with the tongs and placed that coal back into the fire and he just used it as an illustration.

[23 : 55] When you're by yourself, your love and delight in God, it quickly gets cold. But when you put that coal back in with the other coals, it quickly fans into flame again.

So be careful how you measure this delight and desire. It doesn't take me long to lose it. When I'm by my, I miss a few weeks, because whatever else, of being with the Lord's people.

It can go cold, but when we're together, it fans into flame again. I love your house, not the building. The people who focus on Jesus, I love, I love being here.

So these are the marks of someone who can't run away from the steadfast love of the Lord. It's at their core identity. It's too core to who they are.

Not pure, small, needs refining, but it's there. But in the end, this is a psalm of David, God's chosen king.

[25 : 23] David was vindicated before the unbelieving world when he struck down Goliath. And what happened when he was vindicated? Peace showered on all Israel.

When Saul raged against him with false accusations, he didn't take it by force, although he had great opportunity to strike Saul down and just take the throne.

He didn't. He waited for the Lord and the Lord vindicated him. What happened? Peace came to Israel. His reign, justice, mercy.

When Absalom, his son, tried to usurp his throne, David was a weak king at that point because of his failures with Bathsheba and Uriah.

He deserved losing the kingdom, but he was God's chosen king. And when God vindicated him in the end, Israel were blessed in the height of their kingdom under his son, Solomon.

[26 : 40] Peace, prosperity, blessing. When God vindicates the king, the king, all the king's people are blessed. Ultimately, you can pray this psalm if you delight in the fact that these words make the most sense coming from Jesus.

When he's vindicated, we're blessed under him. Blessing showers down. I imagine that lonely walk of Jesus from Pilate outside Jerusalem carrying his cross.

Each step vindicate me, O Lord. I've walked in my integrity. I've trusted in you, Lord, without wavering.

I imagine when his feet were lifted up on that cross, he can say at the end, my foot stands on level ground. In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord.

It's his vindication. This makes sense of this psalm. It's his vindication that means I can take this psalm and know all his blessings are mine and I can pray this.

[28 : 00] Peace and justice and mercy, every blessing is showered down because our king was vindicated. So fix your hope on your king's integrity that he was vindicated in his resurrection and you have every right to pray Psalm 26.

Can I encourage us, pray it above our feelings. I was listening to a sermon the other day and someone said, most of the Christian life is telling your feelings where to get off, to take God's word and say it above it and we're not just saying it to some abstract thing, we're praying, these words are given to us to pray to the Lord.

Pray it above false accusation. Pray it above true accusation of your known sin. Pray it above your lack of assurance.

Vindicate me Lord because of Jesus' sake. Vindicate that I am yours. and wait for him.

We look forward to his return when our king comes back and we'll be in that great assembly.

Vindicate me oh Lord that I am yours.

[29 : 41] Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father again I pray for those those of us who are keenly feeling unworthy to believe that they are yours for whatever reason.

I pray that the the blessings that Jesus has won for us would shower down upon our souls and I pray that you would fill us with your spirit to pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus with confidence knowing that we are yours.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.