

Vindication of the Faithful

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Date: 06 July 2025

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[0 : 00] It's fine. We, of course, want them to feel comfortable to stay in here, if so led, but also want to provide! a nursery opportunity for them as well, ages zero to three, but I'm glad that they found their place.

And it's time for us to open our Bibles and turn to Psalm chapter 26 this morning. Psalm chapter 26. We're continuing our summer series through the Psalms.

We've kind of paused our series in Genesis for several weeks during the summer to walk through the Psalms together, and we've come to Psalm chapter 26. And so when you found that in your copy of God's Word, either your own or the one in the pew Bible there in front of you, in the seat back in front of you, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word from Psalm chapter 26.

Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Prove me, O Lord, and try me. Test my heart and my mind.

For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.

[1 : 20] I wash my hands in innocence 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. Be gracious to me. My foot stands on level ground.

In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we praise you for this psalm.

We praise you for this prayer for vindication. And Lord, we ask now as we open it up that you would speak through the preaching of your word. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[2 : 21] You may be seated. Well, I have had the joy of experiencing a couple of knee surgeries in my life. And both times the process was exactly the same.

The goal is to open you up, to open things up and to see what's inside. But they don't just cut you open right away. There's a process in place.

So step number one is that you go and voluntarily put yourself up on the doctor's table. And they start tugging at your leg and shifting your knee all around.

They're testing to see, the doctor's testing to see if there's any structural lack there in your knee. He's testing the structural integrity of your ligaments. And then step two, from there you go and they sign you up for x-rays.

Now, you know that you don't need x-rays. They know that you don't need x-rays. But for some reason, they sign you up. They want to see if you have broken any bones. And they put you in the x-ray room and get your x-rays.

- [3 : 22] And it's really pretty impressive. You get a photographic image of the inside of your body. You get to see on a sheet of paper your bones and how they interact and how they hold together.
- Again, they want to see, is there anything lacking here? Is there anything that needs to be fixed? That's step number two. And then from there, step number three is that you finally get to go to the MRI machine.
- And you lay down flat and the machine moves you back into this little tunnel that spins and whirs and makes all sorts of noises and moves around. And that's where they proceed to produce another image of your insides that show all your ligaments.
- They can see, finally, if you've torn something, if everything's holding together, if everything's as strong as it ought to be, or if there is anything lacking. But still, that's not the final step.
- The final step is that the surgeon gets the knife and he cuts you open. And he finally gets to look firsthand and lay his eyes on what is going on inside of you.
- [4 : 32] And if he's good at his job, then he fixes it. But you think about that whole process. You have been completely exposed inside and out. There is nothing to hide in that moment.
- You are quite literally laid bare before him. And if you have any flaws, any lack of integrity, any weaknesses at all, by this point it has been found out.
- And now the surgeon can get to work. I wonder if you have ever asked the Lord to open you up, to take a look, to cut you if necessary, but to examine you inside and out.
- And to see if there's anything lacking in you, any shortfall in you, any lack of structural integrity in your life. In our psalm this morning, David lays himself out before the Lord.
- He willingly places himself on the Lord's examination table. And he invites God, take a look. Examine me. See me inside and out.
- [5 : 40] Test the integrity of my heart. Peek into all my thoughts. Peek into all my ways. It seems like King David here has been wrongfully accused.
- His enemies are saying one thing about him, but he says, Lord, you take a look at my life and you'll see something different. You'll see that I am innocent.
- So let's look here at Psalm 26. And what we'll see here this morning is three ways that King David is blameless. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes.
- These are three categories of blamelessness that David lays out before the Lord. And really, these are three categories of blamelessness that Christians, all of God's people, ought to strive towards.
- We ought to be striving towards blamelessness in all of these ways. So three ways that King David is blameless. First, we see David says all his paths are pure.
- [6 : 39] All his paths are pure. Look there to verse 1 with me. David is emphasizing here in verses 1 through 3 that his walk, his paths, his ways are pure.
- And you remember how David prayed last week in Psalm 25. What did he pray? He said, Lord, make me to know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths.
- Lead me in the truth and teach me. And it seems like in this instance now here in Psalm 26, the Lord has answered that prayer in David's life. David is not walking in sin.
- He says that he has walked in unwavering trust in the Lord. And so whatever the accusations are that David is facing from the outside here, he calls out to the Lord in prayer and says, Vindicate me, O Lord.
- I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. His paths are pure. He claims unwavering trust in the Lord.

[7 : 41] You know, our first thought, if we know anything about David's life, ought to be, well, that's not really true, is it? Has David forgotten about Bathsheba?

Has David forgotten about Uriah? Has David forgotten what he writes later in Psalm 143? This is the same David who writes Psalm 143 verse 2.

Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. Is this not the same David that wrote Psalm 14 where he says, There is no one who does good.

Not even one. David knows that he's a sinner. And so how is he so bold as to call out to the Lord and ask him to open him up and to test all his ways and to vindicate him and to claim that his walk, his ways, his path is totally pure?

It's important that we realize that this is situational blamelessness. Not total, complete, absolute blamelessness.

[8 : 51] You see the difference? He is, in this situation, blameless. No, he's not totally sinless. He's not without sin. But in this instance, he is innocent.

David is being wrongfully accused. He has been walking the path of purity. And yet his enemies from the outside accuse him and try to tear him down by saying something that he has done, which he has, in fact, not done.

But you can imagine a courtroom scene where one party is accused of a crime that they did not commit. They are innocent. They know they're innocent and they have the receipts to prove it.

Their appeal to the judge might sound a lot like what David is doing here in Psalm 26. Vindicate me. I have walked in purity. Of course, that person isn't totally, perfectly without sin.

Yet in this particular instance, they are innocent. So they lay out their defense and they plead their case. That's exactly what David is doing here.

[9 : 55] David knows that he's not sinless. If you look at verse 11, he says, Lord, be gracious to me. Sinless people don't need grace. In fact, in verse 2, he says, Prove me, O Lord, and try me.

Test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. In other places in Scripture, these words, testing and trying, they refer to being refined like gold or silver.

Purified. Tested through the refiner's fire. So David is asking God on one hand to see how he's walked in innocence in this instance, but at the same time, burn up anything that's lacking in me.

Take me and burn up all the dross in my life. I want to walk in faithfulness. I have walked in faithfulness in this instance, but yet I still know that there's sin yet to be dealt with in my life.

And so would you come and would you burn it off? Would you cut me open and expose all the impurities and then get to work healing me and putting me back together as I ought to be?

[11 : 08] Try me and test me in my heart and in my mind, for your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. David is praying as a sinner, yes, but as a sinner who has been brought by the grace of God into covenant with the Lord.

A sinner who keeps his covenant love and his faithfulness ever before him, so that even as a sinner, David desires to be blameless and to be holy, and he wants blamelessness to characterize all his ways, all his paths.

Friend, to be a Christian, of course, it means to know that you are a sinner. That's where it begins. The Spirit of God, through the Word of God, convicts you of your sin, convicts you of your need for forgiveness, and by his grace, you put your faith in Christ as your only hope, the Savior of sinners.

That's what it means to be a Christian. But then, once you are saved by the grace of God, by faith in Christ, you begin to all of a sudden have this strange desire to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Where did that come from? This foreign desire to be blameless in all your ways, to walk in the path of purity. You want to represent the King in your life, so that when others stand to accuse you of wrongdoing, we don't want to give them any material to work with.

[12 : 44] I'll give you an example from my own life, real life example. There was an individual within the church, not this church, by the way, who had become so distrusting, and so divisive, and so deceptive, that really he began to deceive himself, and believe his own lies.

And what he did, was he spread an accusation within the church, that the leadership was basically mishandling money. We were taking money that was supposed to go support a church plant, in another place, and instead we were pocketing it.

That was the rumor that was spread. Now of course, there's paper trails for everything. And we literally, quite literally, had the receipts to show, no, this is in fact not true, but he was bent on uncovering some wrongdoing in us, and so he persisted, to the point where this individual hired a private investigator, just to dig something up, just to find something.

And we knew this, because he finally admitted it to us, that he had done this. Now of course, on one hand, we were grieved by this. We never want to see an individual fall to this sort of sin, and deception.

We hated to see this happen, but at the same time, I'll tell you what, there was absolute peace, in knowing, that there was nothing to be found.

[14 : 13] There was peace in knowing, that by the grace of God, are we sinless? No, absolutely not. But in this instance, were we blameless? Praise God, yes. So we could say, whatever happens, Lord, you vindicate us, and we will keep your steadfast love, in front of us.

We will walk in integrity, by your grace, your faithfulness has guided us, so vindicate us, Lord. I wonder, if someone were to investigate your life, your week, past month, past year, would they find you, walking in faithfulness?

Is there anything lacking, in your ways, any part of your path, that needs to be tested, and needs to be refined? David says, his paths are pure, but not only this, he says second, his people are pure.

His people are pure. Look there with me, starting in verse four. He says, I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites.

I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. David says, my people, that I surround myself with, the company that I keep, is godly and pure.

[15 : 32] David's not guilty, and now we see, he's not guilty by association either. He does not sit with the wicked, he doesn't associate with hypocrites, those who just look godly on the outside, but the inside is impure.

He hates the assembly of the evildoers. Well, there's echoes here of Psalm 1, aren't there? The blessed man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Throughout the book of Psalms, and really throughout the entire Bible, the word tells us clearly, over and over and over again, that there are two categories of people in the world.

There are the righteous, and there are the wicked. There are sheep, and there are goats. There are wheat, and there are tares. There are the seed of the woman, and there's the seed of the serpent.

There's God's people, and not God's people. There's those in Christ, and there are those who are in Adam. There are those who are bound for judgment, and those who are bound for glory.

[16 : 48] Only two kinds of people in the world. Now, we don't tend to think in such black and white terms, do we? But the Bible absolutely does, and David says, I am not one of them.

They aren't my people. Of course, this raises some questions, doesn't it? Questions about the ways that Christians interact with the non-believing world.

Questions like, well, aren't we supposed to be around non-believers? Do we just want to live in a Christian bubble, and never interact with the world around us?

And didn't Jesus interact? Didn't he eat and drink with sinners? How am I supposed to reach the lost world if I'm never around them? These are all good questions. Christ has given us a commission that cannot be accomplished apart from being around non-believers.

The great commission call is to go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

[17 : 57] Christians are called to be ambassadors of Christ, but that very term ambassadors, it means that we don't belong to this world that we're seeking to win. We go out as citizens of another kingdom.

We go out as servants of another king, representatives of another king. We're called to shine as lights in the midst of darkness. There's a distinction here. And so, no, we're not meant to just retreat in our Christian bubble.

We're meant to advance the gospel and bring the wicked out of darkness and into the light by the only means that God has given us to do so is the power of the preaching of the gospel.

So we engage the lost while recognizing that we are distinct from the lost by the grace of God. When we engage our lost friends and our non-believing family members and our lost co-workers and our lost neighbors, we need to remember that there is a spiritual distinction by the grace of God between us.

And that's a distinction that can only be removed by the Spirit through the gospel. If you are in Christ, then those who are not in Christ are no longer your people.

[19 : 20] David says he is not to be included in the wicked. Don't group me in with them. They are not my people. So we ought to ask, well then, David, who are your people? And the obvious answer is that would be the community of the righteous.

Get this courtroom image back in our minds. As the prosecution comes with the accusations and the time comes for the defense now to call up some witnesses to the stand, that case is a lot harder to defend if there aren't any witnesses, right?

Or even worse, if all the witnesses that David calls up are known liars, known evildoers. David says, I have witnesses.

I have people who can attest that I am walking in purity. They can speak on my behalf. I'm not walking alone. I am walking with the community of faith.

David wants to surround himself with the believing community.

[20 : 25] He wants to be amongst God's people who are also striving to walk in the ways of the Lord, who are locking arms with him and helping him to walk in integrity, who are calling out to the Lord with him and for him, who share the same desire to know and to honor the Lord in all of life.

These are his people. Now listen, every Christian is called to be a part of a community like that. You know where we find it?

It's in the local church. The local church. The church is the community of the righteous here on earth.

When you become a Christian, something happens in you. There is a bit of an uprooting. It's a transfer of belonging that takes place. The people that you used to associate with, the things that you used to do, the things that used to be normal and just a part of who you are are no longer a part of who you are in Christ.

They become strange to you. And so as you maintain those relationships with your non-believing friends and please, if at all possible, maintain those opportunities, but as you maintain those relationships, you now interact as a missionary in those contexts, not as one who belongs.

[21 : 55] The Christian's primary hub of life and friendship and community, it becomes the local church. And it's here with these brothers and sisters that you find your people.

Friend, we all need that, but I would dare to say in our individualistic age, we're all prone to make a few tragic mistakes. For one, we can try and carry on with our old friends and our own old lives as if nothing has changed in us.

That'll never work. If you are in Christ, you are a new creation. The old has gone. Behold, the new has come. Everything changes.

Still another tragic mistake is that we can seek to live as a disciple in isolation from other believers. That'll never work either. Not for long.

We need God's people around us to help us to grow and to walk with us. But still another tragic mistake is that we can come around God's people without ever truly committing to God's people.

[23 : 07] We can come around without building our lives around them, without them really being our people. And so we attend a church service on occasion, but we're not actually linked in as part of the body.

We may attend a scattering of Christian activities, Bible study here, Bible study there, prayer group here, but we're not really just locked in with a people. We all need others who are committed to our spiritual good, who will link arms with us and help keep us on the path of righteousness, who we can call to the stands to give a defense on our behalf because they know us and know our lives and know our heart.

David says, I am with the people of the Lord. My people are pure, but not just this. Third. Third, he says, my praise is pure.

My worship is pure. Look there to verses 6 through 8. David says, I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O Lord, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud and telling all your wondrous deeds.

This is worship language. This is temple language. David, as God's king, is committed to worship. He's committed to lead God's people in worship.

[24 : 33] He knows firsthand that the Lord is worthy of his praise. He is moved in his heart to give honor and praise to the Lord for who he is and what he's done. He is eager to go and gather with God's people and proclaim, tell all the wondrous deeds of the Lord.

He's committed to worship. But not just this. Look at this. David is committed to worship as God has prescribed. He is committed to worship as God has commanded him to worship.

You ask yourself, why does David wash his hands? What's the deal with that? Why is he going around the altar? Is this just David's preference? Is that how he likes to worship? Is this what he wants to do?

Is this how he prefers to come and to worship the Lord? He worships this way because God has so commanded him to worship this way. This is a description of worship in the temple.

I mean, just think of all the prescriptions and the precautions that the Lord made for proper temple worship. This wasn't open to interpretation for the individual worshiper to decide how they wanted to worship the Lord.

[25 : 43] The Lord prescribes what is proper worship. David here, he's coming and he's committed to purifying himself, to approaching the altar where sacrifice would be offered for atonement of the people of God.

He's committed to proclaiming the glory of God. David is saying that he is committed to worship, but not just however he feels like worshipping.

He is committed to worship as God has intended. We should realize it is not up to us to decide how God is to be worshipped.

There's so many conversations around worship. Most of them have to do with preference. Most of the disagreements with worship have to do with personal preference. We should realize our preference matters very little in worship.

God himself gets to determine how he wants to be worshipped. We saw a couple of weeks ago, didn't we? Uzzah struck down for touching the ark of the Lord.

[26 : 50] Why? Because God had commanded no one can touch the ark. He wasn't supposed to be carrying the ark in the first place. You think of Saul's tragic mistake.

Saul got impatient waiting on Samuel and so Saul offered up worship. He offered up sacrifice. What's wrong with that? God said it's not lawful for Saul to offer sacrifice. That's for Samuel to do.

So the kingdom is taken from Saul. You think about Nadab and Abihu and in Leviticus chapter 10 offering up strange fire, unauthorized fire to the Lord.

That's worship. They're worshipping the Lord. What's wrong with that? God had not commanded them to do so. Not in that way. The Lord struck them down over and over and over and over again.

We see that the Lord tells His people how He desires to be worshipped. It's not up to us. Our gatherings here, we're not perfect, but our gatherings here seek to follow a reformation principle called the regulative principle of worship.

[27 : 59] You may have heard that term before. Basically what that means is that our worship is regulated by the Word of God. We want to worship as God has prescribed.

And so we sing God-centered, congregational songs that teach and move us with the truth. We read the Scriptures.

We're commanded to do so. Old and new, we offer up prayers for all people. We observe the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism and we center all of it on the preaching of the Word of God.

Basically, we sing the Word, pray the Word, hear the Word, preach the Word, see the Word. Why do we do this? Is it because we just got together and said, this is what we want to do?

This is our preference? No. It's because the Lord in His Word has prescribed us to worship in this way. David has committed himself to worship as God has prescribed, but if that were all it was, it would still not be enough.

[29 : 09] Faithful, obedient worship, totally adhering to the Word of the Lord completely in line with all of His revealed will would still be rejected by the Lord if not for this third component, which is David is committed to worship from the heart.

It is empty and vain to simply follow all the guidelines and get everything right, check all the boxes, go through the motions, do things the right way if your heart is not engaged in worship.

Wasn't that the Pharisees' problem? Wasn't that what Jesus condemned the Pharisees for through the words of Isaiah? Well, does Isaiah prophesy about you, hypocrites?

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. We don't want to worship like that because that's no worship at all, is it?

David worships the Lord ultimately because he says, verse 8, O Lord, I love the habitation of your house. Lord, I love the place where your glory dwells.

[30 : 30] Lord, I love the gathering of the saints in the temple. Lord, I love coming and proclaiming the goodness of God. I love coming to worship the Lord because I love the Lord.

His heart is engaged in worship of the Lord. Is that true of you, church? Why are you here today?

Why did you stand and sing the hymns that we sang moments ago? Why are you sitting here listening to a sermon? It's just out of habit?

A routine? Something you feel like would be good to do? Your family brought you here? Your wife brought you here? Your husband brought you here? Is it something that feels right? Or is it the response of a heart that is in love with the Lord?

Do you love to gather with God's people in worship? Do you love to come and sing loudly the truths of God's character and His goodness even if you're not very good at singing at all?

[31 : 40] Do you love to hear His word read? Do you love to hear the word preached? Do you love to worship because you love the Lord and know He is worthy of it?

One sign of God's grace at work in you is an ever-increasing love for the Lord and a desire to worship Him not necessarily according to your preference but according to His preference a desire to gather together with God's people you know that's what eternity has in store for us together for the rest of eternity all of God's people the congregation of the redeemed will worship and praise the name of the Lord out of completely purified hearts that are just filled to the brim with love for the Lord so that it overflows in songs of praise for the rest of eternity does your heart want to be there?

we get a taste of it here as we gather together with God's people in worship David closes out this song appealing to the Lord again he says Lord lay me bare vindicate me refine me expose all my faults let me be counted among the righteous verse 9 do not sweep my soul away with sinners nor my life with bloodthirsty men and whose hands are evil devices and whose right hands are full of bribes but whatever happens look at this commitment as for me I shall walk in my integrity my foot stands on level ground in the great assembly I will bless the Lord he is resolved he will be blameless friend can we say the same are we committed to blamelessness do you desire to walk in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake are you committed to walk in his path surrounded by his people offering up a praise that flows from a heart that knows him and loves him

I wonder if the Lord were to cut us open and lay us bare examine us inside and out what would he find if you were to be totally exposed before the Lord what would he find lacking you know the word tells us that that time is coming when each and every one of us will stand before the Lord the judge and we will give an account for our lives on what basis will we cry on that day Lord vindicate me Lord don't sweep me away with the wicked Lord count me among the righteous will it be on the basis of our righteousness on that day situational moment to moment blamelessness will only get you so far one good day one unworthy accusation one good hour innocent in this case but not in that will only go so far on that day you must be totally blameless inside and out for your entire life for the

Lord the judge to declare you righteous on that day so what's our hope our only hope is the Lord Jesus Christ the true totally blameless king of God's people Jesus Christ not David Jesus Christ is the only one to walk in true and total perfect blamelessness not just in this situation and that but in all situations there's only one who can cry out for vindication and receive it not on the basis of mercy but on the basis of pure and perfect merit it's Christ Jesus the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect sinless son of David who walked in integrity all the days of his life never once yielding to sin or temptation all his paths are pure and his perfect son of God came to seek and to save the lost yes he ate and drank with sinners not as their associate but as their savior those who were unclean touched him and what happens they become clean those sinners who come to know him by faith they become saints it's

[36 : 16] Christ who has come to purchase a people for himself a pure and spotless bride of Christ it's Christ who's the great dividing line between the righteous and the wicked and it is Christ Christ it is Christ who is the center and the substance of all our worship he is the one in whom all God's glory dwells our love is attached to him he's the only one the only true perfect righteous man and the good news of the gospel is that by coming to him in faith sinners like us may be counted righteous in the sight of God the only hope for sinful people like you and I to be vindicated on that day and not swept away with the wicked is that Christ's righteousness might be credited to our account by faith this is exactly what he came to do for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of

God Christ also suffered once for sins the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied by his knowledge shall the righteous one my servant make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities praise God we worship a just God who will vindicate the faithful he is a God of justice and praise God we worship a merciful and gracious God who justifies sinners like us by faith in Christ the true and perfect righteous king Lord we praise you for the good news of the gospel we confess that not a!

not a single one of us can cry out to you in this way on the basis of our righteousness and say declare me innocent but it's only by faith in Christ that sinners are accounted righteous in your sight and so we pray Lord that if there are any who don't know you in this way that have not yet cried!

out to you in faith Lord would you by the power of your spirit right now draw them to faith in Christ for the church Lord the community of the redeemed we pray that all our ways would be blameless before you father lead us guide us to walk in holiness all the days of our life until the day that you return and we gather together and worship for you before you for the rest of eternity so