

PSALM 26

Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience, to both which he appeals touching his integrity (v. 1, 2), for the proof of which he alleges,

- I.** His constant regard to God and his grace (v. 3).
- II.** His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners (v. 4, 5).
- III.** His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them (v. 6-8). Having thus proved his integrity,
 - 1.** He deprecates the doom of the wicked (v. 9, 10).
 - 2.** He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God, with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God (v. 11, 12). In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be and do that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences, and comfort ourselves with it, as David does, if we can say that in any measure we have, through grace, answered to these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of his psalm, suggests that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence, was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. "We are complete in him."

PSALM 26:1-5

DEVOUT APPEALS

A psalm of David.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very bad man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ,

who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David does in this case.

I. He appeals to God's righteous sentence (v. 1): “*Judge me, O God! be thou Judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put those to shame that falsely accuse me.*” Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him he could appeal to no other then to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me* (¹²⁷Psalm 143:2), *remember not my transgressions* (¹²⁸Psalm 25:7), in which he appeals to God's mercy; but, as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice and begs of him to judge for him, as ¹²⁹Psalm 43:1. Or thus: he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin; he owns his iniquity is great and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy, do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope that, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocency, and a comfort to all who are sincere in religion that God himself is a witness to their sincerity.

II. He submits to his unerring search (v. 2): *Examine me, O Lord! and prove me*, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, as sees through every disguise. David prays, *Lord, examine me*, which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that whoever would might look into his heart.

III. He solemnly protests his sincerity (v. 1): “*I have walked in my integrity; my conversation had agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another.*” It is vain to boast of our integrity unless we can make it out that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and

godly sincerity. He produces here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronise and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with reputation (*therefore I shall not slide*), and that those should not prevail who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 62:4. Those that are sincere in religion may trust in God that they shall not slide, that is, that they shall not apostasize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, v. 3.

(1.) He aimed at God's good favour as his end and chief good: *Thy loving-kindness is before my eyes*. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings and the best of friends and benefactors, and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had the experience of all our days. If we set God's loving-kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being *followers of him that is good*, in his goodness (~~1 Peter~~ 1 Peter 3:13), — if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love, — this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it.

(2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule: *“I have walked in thy truth, that is, according to thy law, for thy law is truth.”* Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving-kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving-kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, v. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despised him*, ~~1 Samuel~~ 1 Samuel 10:27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no, not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or

were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here,

(1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take: *“I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them.”* Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidence of our integrity when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto.

(2.) That David shunned the company, not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity as against that of downright wickedness.

(3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they dissemble. *When they speak fair, believe them not.*

(4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not *go in with them*, he would not choose such for his companions nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them. He might fall in with them, but he would not, by appointment and assignation, go in with them. Or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary: he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as those that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, 1.

1. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous.

(5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here says, not only “I have shunned it,” but, “*I have hated it,*” ^{<120>}Psalm 139:21.

(6.) The congregation of evil-doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated *ecclesiam malignantium* — *the church of the malignant*; so the vulgar Latin reads its. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men, in combination, make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet, otherwise, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers. He was also an example to Christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to *save themselves from this untoward generation,* ^{<120>}Acts 2:40.

^{<120>}PSALM 26:6-12

DELIGHT IN DIVINE ORDINANCES

In these verses,

I. David mentions, as further evidence of his integrity, the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, as the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them as David here tells us he did, v. 6-8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances: *I will wash my hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. “I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome.” This is like that (^{<120>}1 Corinthians 11:28), *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,* so prepared. This denotes,

(1.) Habitual preparation: “*I will wash my hands in innocency;* I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those

dead works which defile it and forbid my drawing nigh to God.” See ^{
}Psalm 24:3, 4.

(2.) Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests' washing when they went in to minister, ^{
}Exodus 30:20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparation for solemn ordinances we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity or hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that (which was signified by *washing the hands*, ^{
}Deuteronomy 21:6), but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity by renewing our repentance, and making fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed (that is, in a justified state) has need thus to *wash his feet* (^{
}John 13:10), to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent is *pene innocens* — *almost innocent*; and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: *I will compass thy altar*, alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, denoting a diligent regard to what was done and a dutiful attendance in the service. “*I will compass it*; I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them.” David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars and could find time for that attendance. Note,

(1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of and *live upon*, ^{
}Hebrews 13:10.

(2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed and to see ourselves among those that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship as the place where God's honor dwelt (v. 8), and therefore made it his business there to honour God and to give him the glory due to his name, to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's

wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible, to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God: "*Lord, thou knowest how dearly I have loved the habitation of thy house* (v. 8), the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people and receive their homage, *the place where thy honour dwells.*" David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See ⁽¹⁰¹⁷⁾1 Samuel 20:27. "But, Lord," says he, "though I cannot come to the habitation of thy house, I love it; my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there." Note, All that truly love God truly love the ordinances of God, and *therefore* love them because in them he manifests his honour and they have an opportunity of honoring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him; he loved the habitation of his house, his church among men, loved it and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching him, find it to be a constant pleasure, a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

II. David, having given proofs of his integrity, earnestly prays, with a humble confidence towards God (such as those have whose hearts condemn them not), that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked (v. 9, 10). *Gather not my soul with sinners*, Here,

1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. "They are *bloody men*, that thirst after blood and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness (for *their right hand is full of bribes* which they have taken to pervert justice), yet that will make their case never the better; for *what is a man profited if he gain the world and lose his soul?*"

2. He dread having his lot with them. He never loved them, nor associated with them, in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them and will call for them again. See ^{<B344>}Job 34:14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners, whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are (^{<029>}1 Samuel 25:29), or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, ^{<413>}Matthew 13:30. Death gathers us to our people, to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous; David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides were of that mind, which if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

III. David, with a holy humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, v. 11, 12.

1. He promises that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: “*As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in my integrity.*” Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us that we have walked in our integrity is comfortable to us this should confirm our resolutions to continue therein.

2. He prays for the divine grace both to enable him to do so and to give him the comfort of it: “*Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying.*” Be we ever so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them.

3. He pleases himself with his steadiness: “*My foot stands in an even place, where I shall not stumble and whence I shall not fall.*” This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world, and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world.

4. He promises himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord, that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should

have a heart for praises, and that, though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil-doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better; it is the more like heaven.