

Psalm 26

Introduction – At first glance, this Psalm does not tend to resonate in our persons. It appears perfectionistic, even arrogant (v1, 2, 3, 5). It seems dishonest to speak this way in light of our own imperfect obedience and wavering faith. David abhors hypocrites (v4) and we can feel hypocritical singing this, praying this, and calling it our own. Is this Psalm about me and for me? The answer is “no,” and then “yes.” In addition, we want to learn to sing the whole Psalter and not just our favorite “feel good” verses (like vv6-8). The Psalter is given to us to shape our singing and our persons.

Christ the Psalm-Singer – We saw how Jesus explicitly fulfilled Psalm 22 (verse 1) and certainly was the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23. The Ascension and Enthronement of King Jesus is clearly prophesied in Psalm 24. But beyond that, we are learning what Jesus meant when, as Luke explains, “*He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27). To the extent that the voice of the psalm-singer is the voice of perfect innocence and faith (v1) it is most properly heard from the lips of Christ. Certainly, while attacked, mocked, and crucified, Jesus obeyed even unto death, all the while trusting His Father and crying out, “*Vindicate me, O Yahweh.*”

David the Psalm-Singer – But of course, David, a man aware of his sinfulness, wrote and sang this Psalm. He knew what it was to fall, but he also knew what it was to walk in integrity, trusting in the Lord (v1). He knew and trusted the character of God, full of lovingkindness, which invited him to call on God to “examine” and “test” and “try” him, even in his mind and heart (vv2-3). This kind of honesty was manifest in his hatred of hanging in the company of the worthless-talk of idolaters and hypocrites; he hates the assembly of wickedness (vv4-5). Instead, he washes his hands in innocence and loves the habitation of Yahweh’s house, His altar, where His glory dwells. This is the gathering where his thanksgiving can be proclaimed over all Yahweh’s wondrous works (vv6-8). And so he prays his soul would not be gathered with sinners and their sinister schemes (vv9-10). Committing himself to integrity, he pleads redemption and mercy (v11). Knowing he has been set on a firm foundation, in the congregation, he blesses Yahweh (v12).

Why Should We Pray and Sing This Psalm? What Does This Psalm Do to Us and Do for Us? – To see Christ in the Psalms is not to exclude seeing ourselves in the Psalms as well; these are not in opposition to one another. Meditating over this Psalm helps us to learn this.

It is Christ-centered and Centers us in Christ – We first hear this song as sung by Jesus and then learn to sing with Him as His body. There is a difference between humility and unbelief. Of course perfect integrity is beyond us; this is why we pray “in Jesus’ name.” We approach imperfectly because He approached perfectly for us. In fact, if you think you must cower, or show some act of penitence, in order to enter in the Perfect Righteousness which is only a free gift, then you are slipping into a works-mentality – and that is a heavy burden. Hear Christ singing – and join with Him, for you are in Him – by grace through faith.

It Places Worship of the Triune God in the Center – And where do we hear the voice of Christ singing (vv6-8, Psalm 22:22, Heb 2:12)? In the center of this Psalm is the center of the Great Story and our lives. Christ’s hands were innocent and it is here that we wash in His innocence; “*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me*” (John 13:8). It is here that we are found blameless (Col 1:21-22), and it is claimed here even as we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). While forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation are ours individually in Christ, this reconciliation places us in a home, a habitation, where we find ourselves joined with brothers and sisters proclaiming “*with a voice of thanksgiving*” and telling “*of all Your wondrous works*” (v7). In this house, aspiring to the innocence that is ours, we must also be aware of our communion together in love (1 Thess 3:12-13). The place “*where your glory dwells*” is this dwelling, *together* in Christ (v8). When we come to this appointed place where the means of grace are offered in Word and Sacrament, we partake of them together, in communion with Christ and with one another.

It Revives our Revival Away from the Wicked and Towards the Righteous – As we said, there is far more to this Psalm than these center-verses, and they cut to some very practical and hard-hitting issues and decisions to be made in light of this center. We join with Christ in loving what He loves – and in hating what He hates. He doesn’t sit with the idolatrous (the word means “vain,” “worthless” as well), or with the assembly of evildoers, or the wicked (vv4-5). He hates those who are bloodthirsty, who have sinister schemes, and love to bribe (or taunt) others to the same (vv9-10, Rom 1:28-32). The temptation to “be with” the wicked just so we can “be with” is a powerful temptation.

It Revives our Soul Away from Wickedness and Towards Righteousness – There is temptation, not only in the community of the evildoers, but there is temptation in the evil acts themselves. Coming out of the “center” of worship (vv6-8), we are renewed and find the “bribe” of the evil one uninviting (vv9-10). While vowing to walk with Yahweh, we pray His mercy (v11) to do so.

Holding Fast in the Assembly – The Psalm begins “*I have trusted...I shall not slip*” (v1), and ends with “*My foot stands in an even place...I will bless the Lord*” (v12). God’s house is that place, and by faith that is where you are. It is the place where your hands are washed in Another’s innocence, where you receive a fair hearing, where your sins are dealt with and where enemies are dealt with. It is where God’s promises are proclaimed, embraced and renewed, where grace and mercy flow. This is where holiness is given, a hatred of evil and a love for good. It is accomplished all in Christ and is given to us all in this community of faith (Heb 10:19-25).