

Here Comes the Judge Psalm 26:1-12

My guess is that at one time or another each one of us has been in the same boat as David.

We have faced our own giants of one kind or another.

We have been wrongly attacked by someone who has an ill will toward us or who wants to ruin our reputation.

In this psalm, David is expressing his concern about wrongful accusations for which he pleads to the Lord for vindication. You have been there, too.

With Bibles open, let's look together at **Psalm 26**.

Our law has a very simple motto: innocent until proven guilty. But it seems in recent years that has turned into guilty until proven innocent. In other words, we think you're guilty, build a case to prove you aren't.

David felt the sting of false accusations about something not recorded for us in his life for which he is making an appeal of innocence and nothing in this psalm gives us any indication about what the false accusations were. In seeking help, he doesn't go to any old judge in the land, his appeal is to the Judge of all, the one to whom everyone will one day have to give an account. In his plea, he is once again citing his own integrity and requesting that he not be judged along with the rest of the wicked who are also being judged. He doesn't want the same fate to happen to him as will happen to them.

There are differing opinions among scholars about the occasion of this psalm. Let me share one.

There were a group of people called the Gibeonites living in the Promised Land when Israel swept in to conquer the land promised to them by inheritance to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They sent a delegation to Joshua pretending that they had come from a distant land having heard about their God and wanted to make a treaty with Israel. They acted the part of distant travelers wearing rags for clothes, worn out sandals, old and patched up wine skins, along with dry and moldy bread. Without inquiring of the Lord, they deceived Joshua and the Israelite

leaders into signing a treaty only to find out later of their deception. Israel honored their treaty and didn't attack. In **Joshua 10** they even defended the Gibeonites. I might have been tempted to leave them to their own fate for their deception saying it served them right. But defend them they did and Scripture tells us that while they survived, they became servants to Israel that was to stand for generations.

Fast forward to **II Samuel 21** where we read about a famine in Israel and David's response to something that had occurred under the reign of Saul.

II Samuel 21:1-6, 14

Even though it happened decades after the fact, God allowed a famine to judge Israel for Saul's sin of trying to purge the land of the Gibeonites breaking the treaty Joshua had made in the early years of their conquest.

Let me also add that according to **I Chron. 8:29-33** Saul's ancestry had ties to the Gibeonites, but for some reason he felt compelled to initiate ethnic cleansing slaughtering his own relatives through genocide.

If these scholars are correct, David is seeking God's deliverance from the famine that he had nothing to do with but felt he was getting swept in the same judgment as those who were guilty.

Whatever the case, David is being falsely accused and rests on his integrity asking for vindication in the matter. Notice first, a prayer from David's standing.

I. A PRAYER FROM DAVID'S STANDING – vv. 1-8

Every nation has good judges and bad judges. You would hope that they would all execute justice based on the law, but that's not always the case. Bribery or their own moral depravity are just two reasons some judges don't judge fairly. Israel was no exception. David doesn't appeal to any of them. He goes right to the top, the Judge who is always fair and impartial, the Judge who knows all and who sees all. The Judge whose eye is discerning and righteous and wise.

If you had a choice to stand before any judge, who would you pick? David went to God. We see in **verse 1** his trust in the Lord.

A. His Trust In the Lord – v. 1

Right out of the chute we know why David goes to the Lord. He is asking to be vindicated. In the KJV it's the word 'judge'. To vindicate means to prove you are not guilty, that you are free from blame.

David then laid out his defense for why he felt like he should receive a judgment of innocence. He trusted in the Lord and had confidence that God knew his character.

David said that he was blameless. The Amplified says **"I have walked in my integrity."**

We discussed this a few weeks ago, but just for a refresher, let's remember that blameless does not mean sinless. I like how Ryrie's Study Bible puts it: **"integrity is sincerity of purpose and single-hearted devotion, not sinlessness."**

Integrity is defined by the dictionary as a **"virtue that means being honest, honorable, and truthful, even when no one is watching."**

Paul says that's the kind of character someone who leads the church should have, someone who does his best to live above reproach in everything he does and says even when no one is watching. I think that's why David stood out even in his youth and why God selected him to be the next king. It's why God described him as a man after His own heart. Who's going know what happens out on the lonely hills away from home while you're tending sheep with no one to see what you are doing?

It's the kind of character that God saw in Joseph and why he was used by God for saving his family. A thousand miles away in a foreign land, away from home, living in a pagan culture, who would know what he did in the chambers of his master? When falsely accused and sent to prison it would have been easy for a person in that deplorable condition to justify giving in and giving up to temptation and become like everyone else. Paul tells us in **I**

Corinthians 15:33 that bad company corrupts good character. We might well understand if he chucked his faith and acted like everyone else. But not Joseph.

Then there's Daniel who was falsely accused and thrown into a den with a bunch of hungry lions. Ripped from his home as a teen during the conquest by Babylon and thrust into a competitive situation by a ruthless despot, it would have been easy to go with the flow and do what everyone else was doing and just fit in and not rock the boat. **Who would have known back home?** It's not like there was social media where someone could snap you in a compromising situation and post for everyone to see.

There's something that David and Joseph and Daniel had in common, and it led to their integrity, their desire to do what was right. Though separated by centuries, the common thread that bound them together is what we see in **verse 1** of David's testimony: **"I have trusted in the Lord without wavering."** No matter how bad the situation is, trust the Lord by standing firm.

To waver is to vacillate about choices. You have a decision to make, and you can't make up your mind. There is a hesitation in doing what you know to be right as you lean toward doing what is wrong. In other words, there is no conviction. Conviction is a firmly held belief that does not waver in what it knows to do. Conviction acts without hesitation. Lack of conviction always lead to compromise

When David says he has lived a blameless life, it means he has lived with conviction, and we see that conviction in many of the psalms he wrote. That conviction rested on God whom David often referred to as his Rock or Fortress or Refuge or Strong Defender. Why? Because David had absolute trust in God. Conviction of heart.

David isn't bragging about his character, but rather expressing confidence that God already knew he was blameless. Another way to look at the idea of blamelessness is to describe it as obedience. There is no question about David's love for God's Word and sought to live his life by what it taught.

Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do Your will, O God; Your law is within my heart."

Think of trust and obedience as the two sides of godliness. A coin isn't a coin if it only has one side. We can't have godliness without either trusting in God and willful obedience to Him.

David had unwavering trust in God, and he was appealing to the divine judge to defend his reputation based on his integrity.

Charles Spurgeon challenges us to consider that **“Faith is the root and sap of integrity. He who leans upon the Lord is sure to walk in righteousness... Confidence in God is the most effectual security against sin... We cannot trust in God if we walk crookedly; but straight paths and simple faith bring the pilgrim happily to his journey's end.”**

Proverbs 3:5-6 tell us that when we trust in the Lord with all our heart, with nothing wavering, that He will make our paths straight. Spurgeon is reminding us that when we walk with the Lord, such trust will keep us from sin, and we can confidently go to the Lord because we are walking in righteousness.

Would we be able to go to the Lord standing on our integrity because we have absolute trust in Him?
David trusted the Lord based on his character.

Next, we see his test by the Lord.

B. His Test By the Lord – vv. 2-5

It is God who determines the genuine worshipper and those who are just putting on a show. David had asked the Lord to look at his character, to look at how he had lived his life, now he was asking God to do a soul search, to look inside, to consider his thoughts and motives. People can put on a good act. They can give an appearance of being righteous, but their heart and motives can be as black as coal. David was asking God to take a good look deep inside. That's the essence of what he wrote in **Psalms 139**.

Psalms 139:1-4, 23-24

This isn't just a self-examination. He's not even asking God just to give him the once over. Take a good hard look.

For three days I had to endure the painful

experience of sitting through an FDA audit while two government officials conducted their audit. They poured over policies and manufacturing procedures for the company I was working for at the time. It was grueling and nerve racking. Seated at the table was the Quality manager, the Quality supervisor, four quality engineers, and myself watching them meticulously read page after page, jotting down notes, stopping to ask questions not necessarily in an inquiring way, but in some cases very accusatory. They would stop and ask for another document that had to be produced. There were stacks of files on the table. And after it was all done, they wrote out their assessment.

David tells God to go ahead and do an audit of his life, look through the microscope at a spiritually cellular level and take a good long look. Turn him inside out.

Notice the three ways David invites God to consider his integrity.

Test me

Try me

Examine me

David asked God to see how genuine his trust and obedience were. When David speaks of the heart and mind, he is referring to the seat of emotions and the place where we make moral decisions. Now God already knows our heart and motives, He knows the things we do and He knows what we think, but we can still ask God to search us.

Once again David speaks about how much he has trusted in God and His unfailing love. **Verse 3** implies that the motivation for David's trust and obedience is because of God's love. God's love was his motivation for living a life of integrity. Because God loved him, he in turn wanted to love God by living a godly life.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul states: **“The love of Christ compels us.” (II Cor. 5:14)**

**Does your love for God compel you to live godly?
Does your love for God keep you from sin?**

Growing up there were things I didn't do because I

loved my parents.

There were things I did because I loved my parents. I think that's the case for David and he concludes **verse 3** by indicating that he walked *continually* in his integrity, that it was his way of life, something that was habitual, not just when others were watching, but all the time.

Here's how we know that to be the case. Notice how he lived according to **verses 4-5**.

I do not sit with deceitful men.

I do not habitually associate with hypocrites.

I abhor the assembly of evildoers.

I refuse to sit with the wicked.

He said the same thing in **Psalm 1:1** **“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful.”**

Notice the progressive nature of association with those who are wicked and their ungodly walk. Now, that doesn't mean we can't have friends who are not saved. We are to be a witness to them, but we are admonished not to associate with them in a way that they influence us to live like them.

Proverbs 1:10-19

Proverbs 2:1-22

Paul's advice to the Corinthians was to come out from among them and be separate (**II Cor. 6:17**). It's a way saying that we should not live like the world, but instead be distinct in our character that points people to Christ. It's the same principle stated in a different way in **Romans 12:2** **“Do not be conformed (molded – Living Bible) to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”**

The outcome between David and the wicked is vastly different. The wicked will end in destruction.

David has not set as his guiding companions those whose lives are described as deceitful and wicked.

If we are going to invite the Lord to take a detailed look at our lives, could we speak with as much confidence about our integrity as David?

In **verses 2-5** David asked God to test him. Then in **verses 6-8** we see his talk about the Lord.

C. His Talk About the Lord – vv. 6-8

I mentioned in a recent message that when Herod rebuilt the temple, he had ritual baths placed along the path leading up to the Temple where worshippers could pause and wash as a symbolic way of preparing to meet the Lord in worship with a cleansed heart.

David says in **verse 6** that he washed his hands in innocence. This isn't in the same way Pilate washed his hands saying that he was innocent of putting Jesus to death. Instead, David means that he has taken steps to repent of any sins so that he could come into God's presence with a clean heart. Remember that last week from **Psalm 24**, clean hands and a pure heart were required to worship God.

David could walk around the altar without guilt because He was right with God with sins confessed and forgiven. The altar was located just outside the holy place where only the priest could enter. Their animal sacrifice was offered on the altar to symbolize atonement for sin. That David is walking around the altar gives a glimpse into worship during those days. Walking around the altar was also a public display of devotion to the Lord and an invitation for everyone to join in worshipping God.

As he walked around the altar he is proclaiming his praise telling God how wonderful He is. When Randy or Elaine ask you to stand and sing, it's not just to give you a break from sitting. It's an invitation to publicly express your devotion to God for all He has done by joining in corporate worship. In a sense you're marching around the altar.

There's a song from 1973 written by Andre Crouch that is a simple but worshipful chorus. I think David may have sung something like it as he marched around the altar proclaiming his praise of God.

**Bless the Lord, Oh my soul
And all that is within me
Bless His holy name**

**He has done great things
He has done great things
He has done great things
Bless His holy name**

One of my new memory verses is **Psalm 146:1-2**.
**“Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.
 While I live will I praise the Lord. I will sing
 praises to my God while I have my being.”**

As long as I have breath, as long as I’m alive, I will praise the Lord. And that’s how the book of Psalms ends **“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” (Psalm 150:6)**

David says in **verse 8** that he loves God’s house, the place of worship. The place of God’s glory is a way of saying that God’s presence was there. And you can sense God’s presence as David sings his praise. God’s presence welcomes the psalmist’s thanks.

When you worship do you feel the presence of God?
 Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
 I can feel His mighty power and His grace.
 I can hear the brush of angel's wings,
 I see glory on each face.
 Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

In the midst of His children
 The Lord said He would be.
 It doesn't take very many
 It can be just two or three.
 And I feel that same sweet spirit
 That I felt oft times before.
 Surely I can say
 I've been with My Lord

There's a holy hush around us,
 As God's glory fills this place.
 I've touched the hem of God's garment,
 I can almost see God's face.
 And my heart is overflowing
 With the fullness of God's joy.
 And I know, without a doubt,
 That I've been with the Lord.

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.
 I can feel His mighty power and His grace.
 I can hear the brush of angel's wings,
 I see glory on each face.
 Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

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David could talk and sing about all the wonderful

things He had done for the King. Because of his standing, David trusted the Lord, was tested by the Lord, and talked about the Lord.

How is your standing before the Lord today?

Next, we notice a prayer from David’s soul.

II. A PRAYER FROM DAVID’S SOUL – vv. 9-11

Maybe you have heard the term “guilt by association.” It simply means that you must be guilty just by hanging around someone who has been convicted of something wrong. If they did it, you must be guilty too. But that is a false assumption or argument.

David looked around at all the wicked and didn’t want God to abandon him with them, to lump him in with the wicked at the time of judgment.

A. A Prayer About His Abandonment – vv. 9-10

“Do not take away my soul along with sinners” is another way of David saying “don’t take away my life in death along with the wicked.” In other words, don’t lump me in with Your judgment of the wicked. Their walk, their ways, their motives all deserve Your judgment God, but I’m not like them. I’m not with them. He wanted to be separated from them in God’s judgment.

Workers came one day to their master and told him that someone planted weeds among all the crops. **I think that’s what happens in our garden each year. I do such a nice job preparing the soil so Robyn can plant her vegetables and weeds grow up with the plants. I know I didn’t plant them.**

The master said leave them alone and when it’s time for the harvest, the good crops would be separated from the weeds.

David in effect says, when judgment comes, separate me from the wicked who scheme and bribe, don’t abandon me with them and give me the same judgment they’re going to get.

Now, why does he ask that or how can he request such a separation? Verse 11 gives us the answer. It’s a prayer about His atonement.

B. A Prayer About His Atonement – v. 11

Once again, David returns to his integrity, but he doesn't stand solely in his own merits or good works. He understands that redemption and mercy come from God. None of us are righteous in our own rights.

Romans 3:10 No one is righteous, not one person.

Romans 3:23 Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

Isaiah 53:6 We are all like sheep who have gone astray and done our own thing.

We must all come to God with the same unworthy but repentant attitude that the man in the temple who cried out **"God have mercy on me a sinner."**

Peter declares that we are redeemed only through Christ (**I Peter 1:18-19**), that He bore our sins (**I Peter 2:24**), giving us His righteousness so that we could be made right with God (**I Peter 3:18**).

David could stand in God's presence giving praise for God's mercy because of the deliverance from the judgment on the wicked. Only through God's redeeming mercy could David be separated from the wicked.

Do you have such a standing with God with a soul that pleads the mercy of God?

Let's close with **verse 12** and take a look at a prayer from David's security.

III.A PRAYER FROM DAVID'S SECURITY – v. 12

First there is David's confidence.

A. David's Confidence – v. 12a

"My feet stand on level ground."

That's another way of saying he was standing on solid ground. His footing was on the solid rock. Confident in God's mercy and redemption, he was secure.

Paul gave a similar statement of confidence that is as equal a solid footing as David's:

Roman 8:1 **"There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."**

There is freedom from the danger of falling when we are following the Lord. We stand firm on Him.

Gerald Wilson states: **"Clearly the foundation of the psalmist's hope and security is not personal integrity and sinlessness but God's fierce loyalty and enduring faithfulness, which provide a way for essentially sinful humans – who acknowledge their complete dependence on God's mercy and grace – to continue to walk in His presence."**

David had every confidence in God who always keeps His promises. In that he could rest securely.

And then there is David's commitment.

B. David's Commitment – v. 12b

He concludes once again with praising the Lord with an invitation for everyone around him to join in a celebration of corporate worship. It is a commitment on his part that he will continue to praise God that he can stand before God secure in His promise of mercy, knowing that his integrity is not the product of his own efforts, but the working of God in His life to live in obedience. He could praise God for security.

The Amplified puts it this way: **"in the congregation I will praise the Lord."**

Do you have that kind of confidence in the Lord? Is your future secure because of God's redemption?