

A Psalm of Confident Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 January 2014

Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0 : 0 0] Now, if you turn to page 459, please, in the Bibles, we are going to read Psalm 26.

This is the passage Paul will be preaching on later. Psalm 26. Psalm of David.

Psalm 27.

I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. 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.

[1 : 3 1] But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity, redeem me, and be gracious to me. My foot stands on level ground.

In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. May he bless it to our hearts and to our minds. Well, a very good evening to you all.

It would be great if you could turn in your Bibles to Psalm 26 as we spend these next few moments considering David's Psalm. Psalm 26 there. Now, I wonder if this question popped into your mind as it did mine when you first set eyes on this psalm.

Isn't David being just a little arrogant here? His plea for vindication there in verse 1 is immediately followed by a reason as to why it should be granted.

The second half of verse 1 says this, For I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Isn't that pure arrogance? He goes on, Prove me, O Lord, and try me.

[2 : 5 5] Test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness or truth. I do not sit with men of falsehood. And so David goes on.

Just look at how he finishes the psalm over the page. Verse 12. My foot stands on level ground. In the great assembly, I will bless the Lord. Surely, David is being just a little presumptuous here.

It seems as if he is facing accusations. He's having a bit of a rough time. And here he is in the middle of the great assembly worshipping the Lord. He should probably keep his head down for a few minutes.

Wait for things to blow over. This seems, perhaps, a little presumptuous. Isn't this expressing, as one writer put it, a spirit of self-righteousness bordering on the Pharisaic?

Is that what's going on? Well, a superficial reading of this psalm would lead you to that conclusion. But reading, looking at exactly what David is saying, reveals that he is not being arrogant or presumptuous at all.

[4 : 0 7] Rather, David is expressing confident faith. Confident that he'll be vindicated because he is in the right. Not that he's claiming perfection or sinlessness, but he knows he's in the right.

He knows he's innocent of the charges that are being leveled against him. And his plea to God is that he will be publicly found to be in the clear. That's what vindication is.

Publicly found to be in the clear. Now, to be accused of doing something wrongful is painful. Even if the one who is accusing you is absolutely right, it's still painful because you've been found out.

You haven't got away with it. You simply have to own up to the fact that, yes, it was you that ate the last bit of chocolate cake, or usually something more serious. But to be accused of something you haven't done, to have your name dragged through the mud, even though you've done nothing wrong, that is a whole different level of pain and difficulty.

William Wilberforce, that great Christian of the late 18th and early 19th century, one of the leaders in the abolition of the slave trade, he faced fearsome opposition during his campaign to abolish slavery, and for many years after.

[5 : 31] And in the general election, immediately after he successfully got that bill through Parliament, in that election, Wilberforce came under unprecedented, unfounded accusations and misrepresentations from his political opponents.

He was accused of deceitfulness. And that was after a 27-year career in Parliament, built on transparency, built on truth. He was accused of something he simply hadn't done.

And he found that incredibly difficult. He flung himself on the Lord, seeking public vindication, which he did in the end eventually receive. But think also of the Christian leader, maligned by people within and outside the church, when he's done nothing wrong.

His name dragged through the press, subject to scorn and false accusations. So very painful. Think maybe of the Christian in the workplace, accused of wrongdoing, when there's little evidence linking the misdeed to her.

And it's just not the sort of thing she would ever do. So very painful. What to do in that situation? Well, isn't there just one thing that that person wants, who's on the receiving end of those false accusations?

[6 : 59] And it's to be proved to be in the clear, isn't it? To have their name vindicated. Well, that's exactly what we have in our psalm this evening. We see here in this psalm that David calls to God for vindication.

David is calling to the Lord for vindication. The psalmist, David, makes very clear, doesn't he, his reason for writing. He is appealing to the Lord.

He is crying out to him, verse 1, for vindication. He wants to be cleared of blame or suspicion. He wants to clear his name, to be shown to be in the right.

Verse 2, he asks the Lord to prove him, to test him, to try him, to try his whole being, heart and mind. Now, we don't know exactly what has happened for David to seek vindication.

We don't know the exact details of the situation that led to him writing this psalm, other than what's in the psalm itself. Maybe David's integrity has been called into question.

[8 : 07] People are leveling false accusations against him. He's being misrepresented. He might have the words of Psalm 3 in mind. Oh, Lord, how many are my foes.

Many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Perhaps his very salvation is being called into question.

His character has been tarred, or his actions put under the microscope in an unpleasant way. Accusations are coming at David hard and fast. He turns to the Lord for vindication.

He turns to the only one who can truly vindicate him. And we don't know the source of the accusations, but it might just be those men in verse 4 he speaks of, those men of falsehood, the hypocrites, the evildoers.

And we know David faced many enemies during his life. And it's true for the Christian, as it was for David, that for those who stand with God, life will be full of people that oppose.

[9 : 15] Psalm 2 is clear that the kings of the earth will set themselves against the Lord and his anointers. The Christian has always, and will always, face enemies, whether it's in your own family, at school, in the workplace, society at large.

Whatever the accusations that David was the victim of, whatever the source, he rightly turns to the Lord, asking him that he be publicly found to be in the clear.

And notice that David doesn't turn to man for vindication. Isn't that usually the first place you turn to for vindication? I know it's true for me.

I long for another human being to vindicate my actions, to vindicate me when criticism comes. Don't you long for the approval of man? But don't go there.

There is, in the end, only one opinion that matters, one judgment that really matters, and it's the Lord's. We'll often go anywhere else first, won't we? But David turns to the Lord.

[10 : 26] We don't need to go running to man. We run to God. And it is right to do so. It is right when you've been slandered or falsely accused to ask him that you might be found to be in the clear.

God's chosen king, David, faced accusations and enemies to the extent that he penned this psalm. He took the time to write this down. And it's reassuring that this psalm gives us the words to say when we too are faced with false accusations.

Maybe that was your experience looking back on 2013. Your character dragged into the mud. Your integrity called into question. We see here who we must turn to, to the only one who is able to vindicate us.

Wilberforce, it was reported, during that time of accusation in that election campaign, he would often head off to his room and repeat a couple of verses from a hymn written by William Cowper.

He would seek the Lord. He would pray to him seeking vindication. So we see here who we must turn to. We must turn to the one who is able to vindicate us.

[11 : 50] But let's just note that this is not the psalm to echo in your prayers if the accusations leveled against you are true. Perhaps the uncomfortable accusations you've been faced with, maybe from a work colleague or a member of the family, are actually right on the money.

They're actually true. It might just be the case that you've not been totally truthful with the accounts. You've inflated the figures to make yourself look good. It might just be that you've made up the marks for your class's coursework.

That's happened in my school growing up. The accusations made against you might actually be correct. And perhaps what you need to do rather than turn to the Lord seeking vindication is to turn to him in repentance, confessing your wrongdoing.

Turn to Psalm 51, not Psalm 26. So there's our first point. David turns to the Lord for vindication. The Christian in the face of such accusation turned to the Lord.

And as we've already mentioned, David is confident in the outcome. His plea is a confident plea. He is confident that he will be vindicated. And there are two reasons that David gives here for that.

[13 : 07] Firstly, he is confident because he knows that he walks in the right direction. He knows he's walking in the right direction. And second, David is careful about the company that he keeps.

Both of these things give him confidence that he'll be found to be in the clear. Confidence that he'll be vindicated in the end. So let's look at the first of those reasons.

David is confident in vindication because he walks in the right direction. The general direction of David's life is right in the sight of the Lord.

Not sinless perfection. That's not possible here on earth. But it's a general direction of life that is set on serving the Lord.

He is claiming innocence in relation to the particular charges that have been brought against him because he walks rightly before the Lord. Hence his confident claim of innocence.

[14 : 08] In other words, David's ground for his confidence that he'll be vindicated is that he knows he walks with the Lord. He walks in obedience.

Did you notice all those walking verbs in the psalm? Verse 1, for I have walked in my integrity. Verse 3, I walk in your faithfulness or truth.

And then at verse 11, but as for me, I shall walk in my integrity. I have walked. I shall walk. Looking to the past, looking to the future.

David shows his desire to persist on this path of living with integrity. Living rightly before the Lord. And he seeks to obey the Lord with wholehearted commitment.

David's. That is his response to God's steadfast love there in verse 3. That is David's response to God's steadfast love.

[15 : 09] You see, the ground for his living, the ground for how David lives is God's steadfast covenant love. God promised David his steadfast love in his covenant with him.

David, in response, God's trusts and God's promises, taking the Lord at his word and striving to live in obedience to his law. The reason David lives as he does, seeking to walk in integrity and truth, is because of God's promise of steadfast love.

And it's the same for Christians living today. True faith is always accompanied by obedience. Not perfect obedience, but obedience nonetheless.

And such obedience doesn't guarantee us salvation, but it is a sign of salvation. Obedience is evidence of salvation.

And to live rightly before the Lord in response to his steadfast love, seen most beautifully in Christ's life, death, resurrection, that is something that all Christians should strive for.

[16 : 24] To walk in integrity, to walk rightly before the Lord is something to be prized, not despised. Willie's father commenting on these verses says the following, David is asserting that the general direction in his life is right in the sight of God.

Sincere devotion and honest submission of life to God's laws. What Peter calls in his epistle the answer of a good conscience towards God. A life right in its basic essentials in relation to God and his sovereign purposes.

When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, I know nothing against myself yet I am not thereby justified. He is not claiming sinlessness or thinking that he is justified before God by the integrity of his life but simply testifying to a right orientation of life to the will of God.

Not only is this not wrong or reprehensible, it is highly to be desired in the life of God's people. Let's not be ashamed to live lives that are walked confidently in the will of God submitting to his will.

The Christian life is more than what we believe and think. It's what we do and say. It's how we walk. So is the general direction of your life a grounds for confidence or shame?

[17 : 58] will how you walk be a source of confidence when false accusations come? David draws confidence from his life, a life lived in response to God's steadfast love.

Is that true of you and me this evening? That is David's first ground for his confidence that God will vindicate him. He knows he walks in the right direction.

Now let's look to David's second reason. David is confident of vindication because he is rightly separated from the world.

Look with me again at verses four to eight there in the center of this psalm. 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. I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar proclaiming thanksgiving aloud and telling all your wondrous deeds.

[19 : 03] Oh Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. David is clear, isn't he, about who he spends his time with.

He has made his choice. He does not associate with men of falsehood, the hypocrites, the evildoers, the wicked. Notice that he says, I do not sit, verse four, and I will not sit.

He has been determined and is determined for the future to remain separate from the company of fools. And in contrast to that, he loves to be in the temple.

He loves to be where the Lord's glory dwells, verses six to eight. David here practices a right separation from the world. This is wise living.

This is Psalm one living. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. This is a right separation from the world.

[20 : 06] God's heart. It's not a sort of withdrawing into a comfortable Christian ghetto. If we did that, we would be rending Christ's great commission redundant.

Nor is it complicity with the world. That's the other extreme, isn't it? To become so wrapped up in the world that the Christian becomes utterly indistinguishable from all around us.

It's neither of those two extremes. Rather, it's association with the world that's marked by a certain discomfort. We must associate with the world around us, mustn't we?

Christ has sent us out into the world to be his ambassadors, to be fishers of men, to be salt and light. But as we go out, we will feel ill at ease.

We will rub shoulders with people who do not share our deepest convictions and feelings and emotions. And David is surely right, isn't he, to practice a right separation from men of falsehood, from those hypocrites, from the evildoers, the wicked.

[21 : 14] A separation from that and a joining to the place where God's glory dwells, his temple. There is a choice to be made about whose company you seek and who you spend time with.

You must make a choice about who you spend your time with. And it must be a conscious decision. It can be quite easy to just drift into patterns of life, patterns of spending time with certain people doing certain things.

But before you know it, you've ended up being somewhere you didn't want to be with people you didn't want to be hanging out with. Maybe you need to re-evaluate who you spend your time with and where you spend it.

David is quite clear about the choice he has made. And you and I need to be as clear with who we spend our time with. It's practical wisdom in who you choose to associate with.

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying abandon anyone who doesn't show your faith in the Lord. Absolutely not. I am not saying retreat into a holy huddle.

[22 : 22] I am saying be wise with who you spend your time with. It is a choice. Don't invest your time in people that have a habit of saying one thing and yet doing another like the hypocrites in verse 4.

Or to put it more positively as David does in verse 6, the Christian confident of vindication loves to be with the Lord and his people. Where is David to be found?

He is found in the temple, the place where God's glory dwells. And where does God's glory dwell now? What does loving to be in the place where God's glory dwells now look like?

Well it's to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man. It's to be found in every Christian for they are united to Christ and God through his spirit lives in every Christian.

So when the choice comes, are you to be found in church on Sunday with God's people or somewhere else? Who are you spiritually aligned with is the question posed by this passage.

[23 : 35] David's clear and so we need to be clear. That's David's second ground for his confidence that he'll be found to be in the clear. When he is tried and tested, he's confident he'll be vindicated because he's been walking in obedience and he's been clear and wise about who he spends his time with.

So here we have a psalm of confident faith in the face of false accusations. David had accusations thrown at him, but he sought public vindication from the Lord, confident that he'd be found in the clear.

confident because he knew he was in the clear. Now his walk in life wasn't perfect, but it was a walk in the right direction.

He chose his company well, preferring the temple over fools. So as false accusations maybe head your way this year or next year or the year after that, you too can have confidence as you strive to live in obedience.

Don't be tempted to be ashamed of being known as a man or woman who seeks to live in obedience to the Lord, the rightful ruler over our lives. You can have confidence as you make wise choices about who to spend time with.

[25 : 02] And when those accusations come, painful as they are, you can seek the Lord, turn to him, ask him to vindicate you.

Maybe it's another church that we partner with whose leadership comes under attack. False accusations are thrown. Well, take those accusations with a pinch of salt.

Seek that God would vindicate them. Ask yourself, do these men walk with the Lord? God, is that their track record?

Are they obedient? Do they keep wise company? If the answer to those two questions is yes, then think very carefully before diving in with everyone else with those accusations.

Ask the Lord that he would publicly vindicate such people if the accusations are indeed false. So we seek the Lord in those moments when false accusations are flying.

[26 : 11] And so where do we find David at the end of this psalm, verse 12? Well, he stands on level ground in the great assembly, blessing the Lord.

Lord. And so we too, with our conscience clear, clear that we've not done what's been accused, we will be able to stand as David does in the great assembly, praising the Lord.

Lord. And it's my prayer as we close that those moments when we are faced with those accusations, we'll be able to say as David does in verse one, vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

Let me pray. Father, we do thank you for your word, we thank you for the psalms, we thank you for this psalm, which gives us words to speak, words to pray in those dark moments when accusations come, when false accusations come.

Would we turn to you for vindication, to be publicly seen to be in the right? And Lord, might we in the meantime seek to walk in obedience, seek to be wise with who we spend time, so that we might stand as David does with confidence on level ground, worshipping you.

[28 : 03] So Lord, help us to live, to respond to this now, for your name and your glory. Amen. good. Thank you.

It's a heavy mówi you be in theze,