

Psalm 26 -- "Self-Examination before My LORD!" (part 2 of 2)

III. JUDGE MY WORSHIP (vv 6-8) – This is arguably one of the most important areas in every believer's life that needs the LORD's scrutiny. In today's context, going to church for worship has become more of a ritual than we would like to admit. Very often, the real reason for coming to church is lost or forgotten. Therefore, there is no heart preparation as going to church for "worship" is more like going to a club to meet friends. The people of Israel had the same problem, which is that of familiarity breeds contempt. They had been worshipping the LORD at the Tabernacle since the time when Joshua brought them into the Promised Land. That was more than 500 years ago! Bringing animal sacrifices year in and year out had become the norm in Israel. Even though the period of Judges lasted more than 350 years, the animal sacrifices continued to be practised, albeit in front of idols, more years than Israel would like to admit!

As for David, he did not want his worship of the LORD to become a ritual. He asked the LORD to judge his worship. He began by saying that "he has washed his hands in innocency." David realized that worshipping the LORD is not merely a Sabbath day affair. He knew very well that if he had been sinful the week before the Sabbath day, his worship would be futile. He asked the LORD to examine him as he had not committed anything murderous, not even when he was justified to kill King Saul on at least two occasions. David said that he must not touch the LORD's anointed even if it means an immediate cessation of his fugitive life! David knew that he would not be guiltless before the LORD if he were to do so!¹ When David said that he had washed his hands in innocency, he did not mean that he was sinless but that his life was without reproach. It is important to make a distinction between what we do before man day in and day out, and what our motives are day in and day out! The former has to be circumspect and beyond reproach. The latter has to be repented of daily, that God would wash us with the blood of Christ all the time. David was referring to the former rather than the latter.

With this confession before the LORD, David said that he would compass the LORD's altar (synthetic parallelism). To walk round the altar is an acknowledgement of one's innocency, i.e. with nothing to hide, his conscience and life being clean and pure before God. This was probably the altar of burnt offering that the worshipper, including the king, was allowed to approach. The altar of incense was inside the holy place which only the high priest and priests were allowed to enter. The blood of the animal sacrifice was poured round the altar. It implies that all areas of David's life was well

¹**1 Samuel 24:6** (KJV) "And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD." **1 Samuel 24:10** (KJV) "Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade *me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the LORD'S anointed." **1 Samuel 26:9** (KJV) "And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?"

with the LORD. David knew well that it is so easy to sin and hide from man but never the LORD. It is so wonderfully refreshing to approach God with a clear conscience every Lord's Day in worship because one has been living every day of the week with the same clear conscience before the LORD!

Verse 7 – With a clean and pure heart David was able to approach God and praise Him. He declared that he might publish, i.e. proclaim out loud, with the voice of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a rare commodity in worship. Paying lip service is common but to thank God sincerely from the depths of our soul is not very common today. What do we usually thank God for? Are they not material rather than spiritual? When believers thank God for material things, their eyes are earthbound and they thank God based upon the size of their wealth and health! This form of thanksgiving is carnal. The reason is that for the church, the blessings from God are no longer material but spiritual. For the nation of Israel it was both material and spiritual; they were "married" to the Land for them to exist as a nation! They worshipped God in spirit and in truth and in location. The measure of the Lord's blessings to Israel was in terms of the physical (see Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). For the church it is not. The church worships God in spirit and in truth only. Therefore, the believer's thinking has to change. His blessings from God are only spiritual. This does not mean, however, that the believer ought not to be grateful for the material things that he receives from the LORD. What it means is that he does not measure his blessings from the LORD in terms of the material. He can be very poor and be without a home for Christ's sake and still be very blessed by the LORD. He can be very sickly and still be very blessed of the LORD. When this is not properly understood, the believer will find it hard to thank God sincerely from the heart.

Using synthetic parallelism, David adds that he would tell of, i.e. recount, all the wondrous works of the LORD. The wondrous works of the LORD could be God's creation (cognitive knowledge) or the works of God in his life (experiential knowledge). When the believer looks at creation, he cannot help but sing praises to Him for the greatness and magnificence of His handiwork like what David did in Psalm 19. The wondrous heavenly realm and stupendous majesty of the mountains and oceans and skies evoke a deep sense of praise for the greatness of God. Yet these amazing works are nothing compared to what the LORD has done in the lives of all His children whereby all sins are forgiven and washed away. David's intimate moments with the LORD in his growing up and fugitive years must have been great reasons to tell the world of all that the LORD had done for His beloved. Those special moments when the LORD's comfort and strength saw him through great despair and loneliness must have instilled in him a deep sense of nearness to his LORD that only trials and great sorrows could bring about. The LORD's presence in his life during times of plenty and adversity is priceless. These moments cannot be bought with money. David had experienced the loss of loved ones and friends, being driven out of his beloved country through no fault of his own and being betrayed and hunted by a king whom he desired to serve faithfully and loyally and the LORD was there with him through it all. When David said he had much to share of God's wondrous works, he meant every

word of it. What about us? Do we have any wondrous works to share of how God has touched our lives and been there for us through thick and thin?

Verse 8 – The logical outcome is a heart filled with love for the LORD and for His habitation. Using the covenantal Name of the LORD, David said that he loved the habitation of the LORD's house which was the Tabernacle, the LORD's dwelling place on earth. The Tabernacle always had a special place in David's heart! The idea of God almighty "living on earth" is beyond human comprehension. Why would God live in the midst of sin sick men? But He did. David loved the habitation of God's house. Going to the place of worship where the LORD dwelt was cherished by David. Can we really say to the LORD from our hearts that we love His habitation? It is also the place where God's people congregate with their sacrifices and offerings. It is home away from home! What a wonderful feeling to have. When a man likes a girl, the place where she lives becomes special. When the girl he likes becomes the girl he loves, his mind and heart is filled with very happy and fond memories each time he passes the place where she used to live. David must have felt that way whenever he approached the place of worship! He called it the habitation of the LORD's house! Do you see the church as the habitation of the LORD's house? It would be difficult if verses 6 to 7 are not familiar and cherished experiences!

Using synthetic parallelism, David added that the LORD's house was also the place where the LORD's honour dwells. The Tabernacle was the place where God's mercy and truth were dispensed! It was where the LORD's truth prevailed and there was no lie or deceit. Honour can also mean glory! It was the glory of the LORD that was seen there. The very presence of the LORD on earth was found in this place! David's fondness for the place was based upon his intimate relationship with the LORD. The deeper one's love is for the LORD, the stronger will the love for the LORD's house be and clearer the spiritual sight. There is no place as glorious as the place where the LORD's presence dwells.

The LORD's presence dwells in our hearts today as it was in the heart of every believer throughout the ages, including David's. That is why he was able to see all these spiritual truths when he viewed the earthly Tabernacle. The believer today must also see the church that he worships in as such a place, where God's people dwell and the glory of the LORD dwells. The difference is that when the building is empty, it is just a building. The Tabernacle and the Temple (in the days of Solomon) were different. No one was allowed to enter the Temple or Tabernacle as and when they wished. The presence of the LORD was still there even when it was "empty." The problem with believers today is that they are too worldly to see the significance of the church as the habitation of the LORD and the place where the glory of the LORD dwells. They will be able to see when they have an intimate fellowship with the LORD. To love Him is to love His dwelling place!

IV. JUDGE MY LIFE (vv 9-12) – Using synonymous parallelism, David continued to ask God to examine him, this time with regard to his life. He asked God to make a distinction between him and sinners or bloody men. He was not like them. He asked

the LORD not to "gather", i.e. to remove or assemble for a purpose, his soul with sinners or bloody men. David was referring to his death. He asked the LORD to not assemble him, i.e. to stand before God in judgement, with sinners and bloody men. These were men condemned and consigned to Hell whereas David was not. David knew his salvation. He knew that after death he would not end up in the same place as these sinners.

David was not saying that he did not sin when he was on earth. There is a difference between a person who says he has no sin when he is on earth and a person who asks to not gather him together with sinners after death. David had already dealt with his sins when he was on earth by accepting Jesus Christ as his LORD and Saviour.² The sinners and bloody men David mentioned here were those who remained as sinners when they died and who had committed many bloody acts when they were on earth. These bloody acts would include murder and manifold killings that were against the will of God. David's hands were bloody but not like the hands of murderers. David's hands were covered with the blood of the enemies of God who wanted to destroy Israel. David defended Israel in war time whereas these were men who killed other men in time of peace or even men who went to war for selfish conquest and self glory. David made this distinction very clear, for he knew his LORD and God's truth. David was referring to life after death and he knew that he would go to heaven whereas these sinners and bloody men would end up in hell. David and these sinners may live on the same earth but they would not end up in the same place!

Do you know for a fact where you will be after death? Will you be with sinners and bloody men or with godly men like David?

Verse 10 – These sinners and bloody men lived lives that were filled with mischief. The word "mischief" means "planning to do evil". It does not mean a wrong that was done out of sudden panic and without pre-meditation. Being filled with mischief is to do evil with pre-planning and pre-meditation. These men of mischief study other men like a chess master studies his pieces, then plots and plans how to make use of each and every piece for his own benefit. They would do evil without any regret of wrong doing. Their hearts are hardened by their sinful nature. Their hands are filled with mischief. This means that everything they do has the intent to hurt others. They care not for right or wrong as long as they gain. The will of God is alien to them even though some of them might hypocritically claim to be doing God's will!

Using synthetic parallelism, David said that their right hand is full of bribes. The right hand is usually the strong hand. David was saying that they would resort to bribes to get their way. This means that the first and last thing they do is to use bribery to get their way. These were people of wealth, influence and power, for they would not have the ability to use bribery if they were not. Money and power are twin evils in the hands

²**1 John 1:8-10** (KJV) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

of bloody men and sinners. They circumvent the laws of men and God. They buy themselves into positions of power and leadership. They bribe their way to maintain this power and position. This is their way of life. They have no fear of God at all. They think that they are the captains of their own souls and destinies by their life of bribery.

David was definitely not such a man! Are you?

Verse 11 – Using the adversative "but", David wanted to make a clear distinction to separate from these evil men whose lives were characterised by sin. David desired to walk in his integrity, i.e. uprightness. His conscience was clear before God because he obeyed God's truth with a sincere heart! David's life was characterized by uprightness even if it inconvenienced him. He refused to touch King Saul because Saul was the LORD's anointed and even though Saul's death would deliver him from being a fugitive. He would persevere on in his integrity regardless of the dangers, pain and suffering! This was David's life! When his sin was pointed out to him, he did not point a finger back to blame others like King Saul. He admitted that he had sinned and asked God out of a sincere heart to forgive him (see Psalm 51).

David did not claim perfection but only God's mercy. Using synthetic parallelism in this verse, David added to what he mentioned earlier by admitting that it was because of God's mercy that he was not consumed. He knew that his integrity was based upon God's mercy. Therefore, he asked God to redeem him, i.e. to save him, and be merciful to him. The ability to accept one's life of suffering under the hands of unjust powerful men, like King Saul, is not humanly possible, especially when the "opportunity" is there to kill the enemy and thus end it! David held on to his integrity by the will and mercy of God. God saved him. As long as David understood the sovereignty of God in his life, he could always cry to the LORD to redeem him. David highlighted here that he was not enjoying his life as a fugitive and admitted that redemption had to be in God's time and will. David endured and waited. When God saved him, he knew that he was not deserving of it. It was solely God's mercy! David deserved punishment for his life of generally sinning, even though his being hounded by King Saul was not because of sin.

This is a fact that we must take note of too. We might not be guilty of a particular sin but we are still sinners saved by God's grace and mercy!

Verse 12 – David concluded this wonderful soul searching psalm with another synthetic parallelism. He declared that his foot stood in an even place. What he meant is that he had assurance of salvation and that all was well with his soul. He was standing on an even place so that he would not fall. His faith and trust was in God's unchanging, unfailing and perfect Word. His faith was sure and his trust in his God was assured. David would be found in the congregation of God's people. He would bless the Name of the LORD. This is not arrogance but a simple humble deep assurance of his relationship with God which he admitted was based upon God's mercy.

All believers need assurance of salvation. God wants us to have assurance of salvation which we will have when we know that we will pass God's judgement regarding our hearts, friends, worship and our lives. There is no double standard with God. He is no respecter of persons when it comes to judgement. All four areas of our lives must pass the test! "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." [**Psalm 139:23-24**]