

Psalm 26 -- "Self Examination before the LORD!" (part 1 or 2)

David, the man after God's own heart, wrote Psalm 26. He asked God to judge him. Who would dare ask God to judge his life? Yet David did! What makes David's bold request so amazing is the fact that he hid nothing from God. He dared to ask God to scrutinize his life from inside out. Was he being bold and arrogant? But on closer examination we find that it is not a question of arrogance or boldness; it is simply self examination of one's holy living and desire for his God.

It is very needful for all professing believers to pray like David did in Psalm 26. If we say that we are believers, then are we living a life that reflects the nature of Christ? For to be a believer of Christ is to be a bearer of Christ everywhere we go. There is no place on earth where the believer stops bearing for Christ. To bear Christ means to possess the nature of Christ or to be Christ-like in everything we do, from our hearts to our minds to our lives. David was not boasting. David was crying out to God to examine all areas of his life to make sure that they are pleasing and right in God's sight! For if there is any area in our lives that is not right in the sight of God, we need to repent of it and fix it so that it is right with God again. At the time of our salvation, all areas of our lives should have been surrendered to the LORD unconditionally. Not one area should be held back. Such honesty before God is called self examination.

Self examination should occur each time we come before the LORD to partake the bread and drink of the cup in remembrance of Christ! However, we must not wait until the Lord's Supper before we examine our hearts and lives before God. There ought not to be any comparison with another human being when this takes place. Comparing one's spirituality with others around us is delusional. We tend to compare with those who are worse off than we are. When we deceive ourselves in this manner we are the losers; when we feel good under such circumstances, the goodness we feel about our spirituality is false. The comparison should always be with God's Word, not another believer. With God's perfect Word, our self examination will be true and it will lead us closer to the LORD. It will keep us both grateful and humble at the same time. The thankfulness we will feel after that is indescribable. How does one describe the feeling and understanding of the great work of salvation that is done in us by God through Christ's death and the hope of the resurrection that follows after that?

With such a tremendous and powerful understanding, the love we have for God is beyond words. Serving Him by giving our all to Him is our only reasonable, i.e. logical, sacrifice. Therefore, we are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, without blemish as in Old Testament times. The life without blemish is a life of holiness in all areas. To do this is to ask the LORD to judge us, the way David did! Will you also make this psalm your cry to the LORD?

I. JUDGE MY HEART (vv. 1-3) – The first area of David's life that he asked the LORD to judge was his heart! The heart hides all the secret things that man cannot see. The heart can be extremely wicked and as dark as charcoal, with our outward demeanour as bright and shining as the noon day sun! Because man cannot see the heart, deceitful man can continue to live as hypocrites by presenting a false image of

kindness and goodness when in reality they are evil and wicked! There are many who are like this in the church, even within the leadership. It is therefore most appropriate that the first area to ask God to judge is the heart! Using the imperative in the verb "judge" not so much as a command to God but rather as an urgent cry, David pleaded with his covenantal LORD to judge him. Then he testifies to his LORD that he had walked in his integrity. The word "integrity" means "innocence" or "uprightness." It has the idea of one who is whole or complete. David cried for his LORD to judge him in terms of how he has lived with his conscience which was clean and pure. He has not been a hypocrite. He was transparent and genuine. What the people saw was the real and sincere David who looked after his father's sheep and who challenged and defeated Goliath. It was the real and sincere David who ran and hid as a fugitive and spared King Saul's life on at least two occasions because he did not want to touch the LORD's anointed. It was the real and sincere David who repented of his sin of adultery. He was not perfect and he did not ask God to judge him because he had no sin, for David knew that he was a sinner saved by grace. David lived a life of genuine sincerity. What kind of sincerity?

The second line of this verse (synthetic parallelism) explains. David trusted in the LORD. He walked in his sincerity as he trusted in the LORD to take care of every aspect of his life. He understood the sovereignty of God. To trust someone is to obey and do whatever that someone says. David obeyed all that the LORD revealed to him. If the LORD sent His prophet to rebuke David that he had sinned against God, David would not point fingers and blame others for his own sin. He admitted that he had sinned and asked God for forgiveness. Trusting in the LORD is not just obedience in things that we like but also obedience in times of rebuke because of sin, and all of us do sin even after we become believers! With this trust in his heart David claimed integrity and asked the LORD to judge him on this basis. With this kind of judgement, David was assured that he would not slide, i.e. to waver. He knew that he would not stumble and fall and backslide in his faith as his trust in the LORD was strong. His walk with his LORD in his integrity would keep him from slipping into waywardness. It is one thing to sin, and quite another to sin and remain in sin. The latter is a refusal to repent, like King Saul. The former is to repent of sin in sincerity and not want to sin again with God's help.

Verse 2 – The verb used in verse 1 is "judge" which means "to pass sentence" on one found guilty of wrong doing! The verb in the second verse is "examine" which means "to test", like testing metal to see if it is real or not. Using another imperative for the verb "examine," David then asked the LORD to examine him. Using another imperative in the next verb, "prove," David asked the LORD to test him by smell, which means to test him in any way He liked to see if he was genuine or not. David opened the door to all sorts of trials and testing as he submitted himself totally and unconditionally to the LORD. If the LORD wanted to make him live like an animal to see if he would continue to trust Him and walk in his integrity, then David would willingly submit himself to such a test. This was what David meant with his use of the first two verbs!

The third verb is also in the imperative. The word "try" means "to refine" or "to purge". David knew that he was far from perfect and that the way to become more and more like Christ was to experience the crucible of the fires of persecution. There was no other way! Therefore, David cried to the LORD for urgent purging of all areas of his life so that there was no dross in any area. He asked the LORD to test his reins, used figuratively to refer to his mind as well as his heart! What an amazing man! He wanted to be true and transparent with his LORD! What a refreshing request from the man after God's own heart! He wanted the LORD to do whatever it takes to ensure that there was no hidden motive or personal agenda in all that David did in his life and for the LORD. He wanted a motive that is pure and clean and that would always seek the glory of God! Regardless of what his enemies or others might think of him, the One person whose evaluation of him mattered the most was his LORD! All that David did would be useless if his heart and mind were not pure and clean. He wanted the glory of God to be magnified in all he did! He could not do that if there was some dross or iniquity in his mind and heart! "Purge my mind and heart" was David's cry!

This must also be the cry of all of God's children today!

Verse 3 – The LORD's lovingkindness was in front of David's eyes. The word "lovingkindness" is one of the richest words in the entire Old Testament. There is no single English word that can capture the full meaning of the Hebrew word. It has the idea of love, kindness, pity, loyalty, including mercy and piety. The KJV chose the best by combining the idea of love with kindness. It is God's love and kindness toward David that enabled David to cry to Him to judge Him. He was sure that his LORD would be just and fair in His evaluation. He wanted the LORD to search his heart thoroughly. The basis and standard in which this search is done is God's perfect and holy Word which David described here as "truth"!

David's certainty that the LORD would judge and examine and try him was based upon God's lovingkindness and His truth! The former describes the mercy and gentleness of God. Thus if David was found to be short of God's glory, then his genuine and sincere repentance would never be rejected by the LORD. The basis is not some arbitrary last minute subjective standard but the unchanging and forever perfect Word of God that God has inspired and preserved for all His children throughout the ages. This same Word was given to David so that he would be able to know whether his life was acceptable in the sight of God.

Thank God for His precious and perfect Word to show us the way. Now every child of God who lives his life in light of God's Word can have peace in his heart and ask the LORD to judge him the way David did! Dare we to imagine a world without the Word of God? We would all be plunged into darkness and have no idea what is right and what is wrong.

II. JUDGE MY FRIENDS (vv. 4-5) – It is good to ask God to judge our hearts, but it is just as important to also ask Him to judge our friends or the people we spend time with. It concerns our witness and testimony for Christ. We could bring either shame or glory to the Name of Christ! There is a difference between having friends who are not

believers to whom we can witness and friends to whom we can bear a godly witness. David was not referring to these kinds of friendship, although they are needful and very healthy to have. The kind whom David said to the LORD that he does not have refers to those whose philosophy of life he agreed with and whose sinful actions he condoned. David wrote that he did not sit with vain persons. To sit with a person means to have the same mind and heart with that person on many issues. The word "sit" has the idea of "living with". In this case, the one who sits with a vain person is also a vain person. The word "vain" does not mean to be very concerned with one's looks. It describes a person who is useless and morally bankrupt. David did not associate himself with such people.

Using synonymous parallelism in verse 4, David restated his position before his LORD. He said that he did not go in with dissemblers. Dissemblers are people who like to hide and conceal. They are not transparent and would do things with a hidden agenda and most of their agenda involves personal gain. David would not have anything to do with such cheats and deceivers. These people appear very mild and humble on the outside but they are basically raving wolves within. They might speak softly with a smile and even bow when they speak, but their aim is to get you to lower your defences and allow them to enter into your heart and capture your soul and loyalty. Once they succeed, they know they can make use of you for their selfish ends to further their hidden agenda. They may dress like Christ, talk like a Christian and even smile and pray like a Christian but they are demons in disguise. They can even worm their way into the leadership and become preachers and pastors and elders in the church. They would give more credibility to their ploy by acquiring theological training. To deceive the foolish, they would butter up the ones who are of use to them.

David stayed far away from such vain persons, and so must we!

Verse 5 – The best way to keep on staying away from such vain persons is to hate the congregation, i.e. assemblage, of the evil doers. These evil men will have their numbers. They will make their group something to be envied so that more would want to join them and be seen with them. Rich men and men of great repute would be in their group to make it as prestigious as possible. They will become the envy of many. David would have nothing to do with them. He considered these kinds of gatherings as hateful. As long as we do not see these gatherings as hateful, we will one day join them and become like them.

Using synonymous parallelism, David emphasized before his LORD his determination to never at any time sit or dwell with the wicked!

We need believers today who can stand alone according to Holy Scriptures. They will not join the crowd because it is the "in" thing to do, and to be seen of the right kind of men. The child of God must always stand on the side of truth and righteousness, no matter what the cost. He does not measure himself by the standards of the world but the standard of God's truth! The only person whose view of him must matter most is his LORD. He lives and stands on His truth at all costs! This was David's reason for

crying to the LORD to judge him. We must do the same every day to ensure that we live a life pleasing to Him all our lives.

[to be continued]