

Vindicate Me, O Lord

Psalm 26

We have another psalm with things you won't find in a modern devotional: "*Judge me, O God.*" For that, we need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to show and teach us. David is not becoming self-righteous and vindictive, but instead patiently waits on God to deliver him.

Summary of the Text

This psalm starts strikingly with "Vindicate" or "Judge me". He wants God to evaluate. David has walked in integrity and placed his hope in God, so he is confident he won't slip (v. 1). He invites the Lord to examine and prove him, to try his innermost being (kidneys) and heart (v. 2). God's covenant mercy is before his eyes and he has walked in God's truth (v. 3). He has not sat with idolatrous mortals nor will he go in with hypocrites (v. 4). He hates the congregation of evildoers so therefore he will not sit with the wicked (v. 5). Instead, he cleanses his hands in innocence and walks around the Lord's altar, singing in gratitude of His wondrous works (vv. 6-7). He loves God's house where His glory resides (v. 8). He does not want his soul gathered with sinners who are bloodthirsty, scheming, and full of bribes (vv. 9-10). Rather, he would walk in integrity and so asks for redemption and mercy (v. 11). His foot stands on level ground so he will bless Yahweh in the congregations of His people (v. 12).

God's Judgment

On the topic of judgment, many people are solely familiar with "*Judge not, lest you be judged*", concluding they are to have no opinion about the actions of others. But the next verse says, "*For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt. 7:1-2). In other words, don't be a hypocrite, and don't even be uncharitable. Be gracious the way God is because you have sought His mercy yourself. So why would David call for God to judge and vindicate? Because he has trusted in God's mercy completely and kept it in front of his face (v. 3). He has asked the Lord to cleanse him from ungodly desires, from sins and past and present, and to preserve him in the future. Yahweh will find no treason, no bribery, no flattery or deceit or cowardice in him because he has confessed it all and more. Humility before God produces this kind of confidence: "*I shall not slip.*" Trust in yourself may produce brief boastful pride but then comes a fall and long-term insecurity sets in. If God knows how sinful you really are—far worse than your worst enemy knows—and He sent His Son to die and cleanse you from all of it, what fear of man can remain? But this means you have surrendered your life—all of it—to Christ.

Bad Company

There's a lot about bad people in this psalm. How can David speak about God's lovingkindness, mercy, truth, and redemption while calling people evildoers, idolatrous mortals, hypocrites, and bloodthirsty men? Is this just Old Testament stuff? Paul says the law if fulfilled in one word: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*", but this comes one verse after saying of the circumcision party, "*I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!*" (Gal. 5:12, 14). So this is not Old versus New Testament since there's no such thing. David is a premier example of patience and kindness to his enemies, sparing Saul's life repeatedly when he tries to murder him (1 Sam. 24, 26). By calling for judgment and recognizing the reality of evil people, we should not become self-righteous or vindictive. But it should make us realistic and aligned with the Lord who hates wickedness (Ps. 7:11). David doesn't sit with idolaters, make plans with hypocrites, or fellowship with the wicked. Bad company corrupts good habits (1 Cor. 15:33). Jesus loved sinners, and when He spent time with them, He had an agenda to love and challenge them. Sinners repented of their sins around Him and Pharisees were constantly exposed for their hypocrisy. The designated driver is at best is an enabler, and is usually desensitized to the dissipation and destruction of his "friends." If you're not offended by sin, you're

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comfortable with it and should expect to imitate it. We know there are faithful people surrounded by corruption as Obadiah was when he worked under Ahab and Jezebel. But he undermined them when he hid 100 prophets and fed them in caves so she couldn't murder them (1 Kgs. 18:4). The issue isn't simply who you're with, but why. What are you doing there? David calls on God not to gather his soul with sinners in the judgment because he wants nothing to do with them in the present.

In the Congregations

David finds his place in the people of God. He loves the habitation of His house where all the forgiven gather to see the Lord's glory (v. 8). Washing his hands in innocence and going around the altar happens with the people and priests in the tabernacle (v. 6). Spurgeon said, "*The saints often sing themselves into happiness.*" When we worship together we come to celebrate the vindicated Christ who was "*declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (Rom. 1:4). If Jesus was a sinner like you and me, He would have died for His own sins and stayed in that tomb. But because He was God's sinless Son, He triumphed over death and was fully vindicated. He was judged and found righteous, becoming both just and the justifier of all who trust in Him. He is not ashamed of us but calls us His brethren—where else, but in the congregation (Heb. 2:12). Put your foot here in an even place and bless the Lord for His redemption and mercy to you.