Psalm 26

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Preacher: Nathan Addington

[0:00] We're going to have a look at Psalm 26. So in your Bibles, turn to page 5, 5, 6 to Psalm 26. And Lucy is going to come and read it for us. So Lucy, over to you, Psalm 26.

Psalm 26 of David. Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life. I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered. Test me, Lord, and try me. Examine my heart and my mind.
For I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness. I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites.
I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. I wash my hands in innocence and go about your altar, Lord, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells. Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with those who are bloodthirsty. In whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of brides.
[1:10] I lead a blameless life. Deliver me and be merciful to me. My feet stand on level ground. In the congregation, I will praise the Lord. Thank you, Lucy, for reading that. And thank you for a short moment to Joanna for doing the PA at the back.

She did that. Great. We're going to get into God's word here. Why don't I pray us into that? Lord, we thank you for bringing us here today. We thank you for the freedom we get to sit under your words. And we thank you that we get to proclaim it and enjoy it together. Lord, we pray that you would speak today. Lord, that your words would be heard. They wouldn't be my own words, but Lord, that you would be speaking through your words.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Great. Let's talk about politicians. As I said that, you probably thought one of two thoughts.
Either, finally, great, they're finally talking about politics. This is what I wanted. Or, what's much more likely is, uh-oh, where is he going with us? Don't worry, I'm not going to try and tell you who to vote for or how to vote.
[2:17] I really don't want to get into that. And I don't really even want to talk about specific politicians. Other than to say that I think, no matter where you sit in the political spectrum of things, you can probably agree that some politicians lack this thing called integrity.

So often politicians say they'll do stuff, right? They stand as they want to get elected saying, I will enact this, I will raise this, and this will be better for your life if we put into place these laws.
And yet when they come into office, those things don't happen. They say one thing and do another. They lack integrity. Or maybe when we live our lives there and we get to see them live their lives, as social media has given us this avenue to see the lives of politicians, and nothing really stays hidden for all that long in their lives.
They say, I believe in love or caring for others or caring for the poor. I believe in unity. And then we actually see a week later, a month later, a story where their lives tell a completely different story. They say they believe one thing and their lives are completely different to what they believe. They lack integrity. But the struggle with integrity is not just a problem for politicians, right?
[3:30] It's a problem for us as well. We want to say, or we want what we believe to be how we live. But far too often that just isn't the case. We've been preaching through, Steve has been preaching us through Romans, and we got to Romans 7 and verse 15 sort of lists this struggle.

I'm going to have to concentrate to read this correctly. But it says, I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. For what I hate, I do. So I do that the wrestle between, as Christians, as we want to follow God, is this wrestle between what we want to do, what we feel God is calling us to, and what we actually do.

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And that wrestle is well documented in the Bible. And I believe that's what this psalm is speaking into. I believe Psalm 26, it's not speaking to politicians or politics, but to this idea of integrity.
The psalm is a prayer of David asking God to vindicate him and deliver him. Look with me at verse 1. It says, he starts, vindicate me, Lord.
And then kind of bookends it all the way at verse 11, saying, deliver me and be merciful to me. This is a prayer of vindication and deliverance. If you keep on looking, you'll see what he bases that prayer on.
[4:41] He says, vindicate me, Lord, for I've led a blameless life. The same in 11. I've led a blameless life, deliver me and be merciful to me.

Basically, it's a prayer of vindication based on his integrity, his life, which is a blameless life. I think it's important for us to pause here and grasp what David means when he says he is blameless.
We know enough about David's life and in the course of the Bible to know that he's not a perfect man. In the pages of the Bible, plenty of ways where he sins and falls short of perfection. Yet I believe here what David is doing in this psalm is he is appealing in faith to the saving grace of the Messiah to come, Jesus.
His claim of being blameless and not having faltered is not one of sinlessness. No, in one sense, only Jesus can truly pray this prayer in Psalm 26 as one who is sinless and never faltered.
Rather, for David, it is a confidence in the forgiveness of God he has received. Claim of a life led with integrity. Christopher Ashe in his commentary on the Psalms puts it like this.
[5:49] David is praying now in faith what Jesus can pray having fulfilled a perfect and sinless life.

He is praying in faith. Jesus prays in fulfillment. So what does that mean? Well, it means when he says, I've led a blameless life, that Jesus praying this prayer would mean a sinless perfection.
And for David and us, it means a life led with integrity. Well, what we profess to believe is what and how we live our lives out. See with me in verse two how David launches into this idea.
Verse two says, test me, Lord, and try me. Examine my heart and my mind. There seems to be an appeal of one pursuing integrity. The desire of this verse and indeed this Psalm is that David would live a life devoted to God and his ways.
David desires that God would examine his heart and mind and see if there is anything not pleasing God. And if there is, that God would rid him of it. We see that desire play out in these verses.
[7:01] Look at me at verse four. In verses four through to five, he refuses to sit with the deceitful or to associate with hypocrites or to assemble with evildoers. And he refuses to sit with the wicked.

Maybe as you read these verses, you like me pause for a little bit and went, isn't that what Jesus does? Jesus sat with sinners. We know he dined with the worst of sinners or tax collectors as they were known at the time.
We know that he sat with and helped and shared his love with sinners. So is David saying that we shouldn't do what Jesus did? Not at all. So reaching out and trying to help sinners, coming alongside them, showing Jesus' love to them and sharing the gospel should be a huge part of what we do with our lives.
But rather the clues for what David means here start in the word associate in verse four. I do not associate with hypocrites. Or as the ESV puts it, I do not consort. To associate or consort here is to constantly and consistently be surrounded by these people.
So it would be to constantly and consistently be surrounded by those who are deceitful, by hypocrites, by evildoers, by wicked. So so much so that your closest friends, the people that are closest to you, are those who are wicked and evil.
[8:16] And those who are drawing you away from God and into sin. You've probably heard these two phrases, but I'm going to say them. I think they're great little phrases.

One of them is, show me your friends and I'll show you your future. Right? Show me your friends and I'll show you your future. Or maybe the other one, which is, your five closest friends are the best indicator of what you will look like in five years' time.
See, if there is any truth to be found in those phrases, who we surround ourselves with matters. And what happens if we surround ourselves with those leading us away from God?
Well, we won't live a life of integrity or a life in God's ways. And that's kind of what David is warning us about. David says that he has seen God's unfailing love in verse three.
I've always been mindful of your unfailing love and lived in reliance on your faithfulness. He knows that he is loved by God. And because he loves God too, he hates sin. And he refuses to surround

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himself with people that are going to continue leading him into sin.
[9:20] And that's the same consistent pattern we see the rest of this psalm play out. David has been loved by the Lord and loves the Lord. And so in verse seven, he says, I go around proclaiming aloud your praise.

And he tells of all of his wonderful deeds. David has been loved by the Lord and loves the Lord. So he proclaims his praise. And in verse eight, he continues this pattern.
He's been loved by the Lord and loves the Lord. And therefore he loves the house where God dwells, the place where his glory dwells. It's the idea that Lord, where you are working, where your people are, where your presence is, there I long to be.
And I wonder, as we see the truths in God's word, I wonder whether God is calling us as a people to an integrity of heart and mind.
Heart in the sense of our deep affections and our conscience. And mind in the sense of our will and our thoughts. So I guess the question is, if God was to examine our hearts and our minds, what would be the place where he says, dear daughter or dear son, your integrity is lacking here?
[10:30] Whether we say we believe one thing and do another. Is it our heart? Is it our affection for God? We say we love him. But yeah, our walk with him lacks this affection and love for his ways.

Our consciences are barely stirred when we sin or when we see the brokenness of this world around us. If that's where we find ourselves tonight, I wonder if our prayer should be that we would ask God to align our affections and our heart with his.
That what breaks his heart would also break ours. And what causes joy to God's heart would also cause us to rejoice in him. Lord, would you align my heart with yours? I wonder if that's our prayer.
Or maybe it's in our mind. Maybe our mind needs a renewal, right? We say we believe in the Bible. We say we believe in the power of prayer. Yet the busyness of life takes over and hardly is our time spent in the word or in prayer.
If that's where we find ourselves, maybe our prayer should be, Lord, would you change my mind? Would you renew my mind to love your ways, to know what is good for me and to walk in those ways?
[11:37] Right. I want to pause here. We're sort of in the meat of this sort of talk. But what I want to say, and I know this is kind of not really done normally, but is keep listening. If I stop now, you could be tempted to leave here thinking, oh, great, I got it, Nathan.

I just got to live in integrity a bit more. I've got to try harder, do a little bit more, and then I'll be an integral lesson that follows Christ. I just got to do a bit more and try a little harder.
Then I'll be all right. If that's even some of what you've heard so far, please keep listening. So the reality of Jesus' sacrifice means that we don't sit here asking God to examine our hearts and our minds and hoping that God will think our hearts and our minds are worthy of his acceptance.
My friends, he knows our hearts and our minds. He knows our sins and the ways in which we sit. He knows it all, and yet he forgave it all, once and for all at the cross.
See, life of integrity, live for Christ, is not motivated by a need to finally get into his good books. But rather, the motivation is what David mentions in verse 3. The motivation is God's unfailing love and faithfulness to us.
[12:52] Shown most clearly in the fact that he sent his son, Jesus, to live a perfect life, to die on the cross, to rise again, having paid for each and every one of our sins. We are to continue lives of integrity, and we must understand that.

We must understand that we stand forgiven. Our integrity and how well we live our lives, there's no impact on if we are forgiven. We've already been forgiven. God has paid the price for our sins.
But rather, it is out of the gratefulness of our hearts for what he has already done. We desire to live lives consistent with this way. Consistent with what God says is the right way to live.
Knowing he always is working, like we saw today, for our good and his glory. It was David's desire in this passage, and I believe it should be our desire now to live with integrity.
So we praise God, knowing that he's not left us on our own to do this, to follow his ways. Rather, he's given us the Holy Spirit to convict us, to supply us with all the strength we need to live in his ways.
[13:51] And also knowing that our integrity has an impact. Because it's one of the ways which we reflect the glory of God to this world, and it's one of the ways in which we witness to the world the glory of the good news of the gospel.

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So I guess the question is, what would this world look like if those who say they follow Christ loved each other deeply, were generous with their time and money, cared for the vulnerable, and loved unconditionally, because we have been loved unconditionally?
I think we would see a world changed by the power of the gospel. We started this talk talking about politicians, and so I thought we'd end, giving a little story about a politician.
But the story is kind of based in the 1700s, so don't worry, your current political beliefs shouldn't be affected. Me, David and Brent, who you'll meet in a little bit this evening, got the privilege of going on a Christianity Heritage Tour on Thursday.
And this was one of the stories we kind of got a little bit of. Also, if you want a better retelling of the story, go to Benvergo. His tours are great. The story starts with this guy named John Newton. Many of you might know him, but his life starts in quite a horrible way.
[15:07] He's, by his own admission, a horrible person. He's a slave trader, and that's what he does. That's his professional job. And through a story, through a series of a bunch of different events, where God moves in his life, he's brought to the realisation of how evil he has been, how depraved he has been, and he actually comes to know Jesus, knowing that even that Jesus will forgive him.

He's the guy that penned the song Amazing Grace, that could save a wretch like me, right? He understands how much of a wretch he is, and he's saved by Christ. That's John Newton.
He becomes a Christian after being a slave trader. He is known as the guy that was the slave trader, now a Christian, and then he becomes a priest. He's preaching in the centre of London and pastor of that church.
And what happens there is, there comes a politician. A politician knows who he is. He doesn't really want to know, he doesn't want to be known to have been talking to John Newton, but he writes him a letter saying, hey, I don't want us to be known to be talking to each other, but I'd love to meet you and talk to you.
So this politician meets with John Newton. He has this conversation, and they go about their days. This politician soon comes to know Christ and sits under the gospel preaching of John Newton.
[16:22] And two years after their first meeting, let me get this quote right because it's not loading up. Yeah, two years after their first meeting, this politician says these words. He says, God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.

If you know your history, you might have guessed by now that this guy is William Woodforce, the guy accredited with the abolition of the slave trade. From that day forward, he would go on to fight the slave trade, and before he died, he finally got to say, this has been abolished.
I think he's a great example of what it looks like to sit under the gospel's teaching to see God has made everybody in his image, the slave trade is a great evil, and to say, I've got power in my position.
I want to live what I believe, live it out in politics, and bring an abolition to slavery. He was a guy that believed the gospel, and believed what Christ said, and lived it out with integrity.
And he is a great witness to the power of the gospel. And so let me end with this. This is a quote by a guy named Louis Giglio, that's at least where I heard it.
[17:34] He's a pastor in Atlanta, and he says it like this. He says, the unfinished work of the church is to proclaim the finished work of the cross. We say it again, the unfinished work of the church is to proclaim the finished work of the cross.

Do you know what a great way of proclaiming the finished work of the cross is? To live our life with integrity. That we might be witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.
Lord, we are so gracious that you, we're so grateful that you've given us your Holy Spirit, that you help us to live these lives of integrity, living what we believe to be true, what we know to be true.
Lord, we pray that you would help us live a life as a witness to your gospel, and to the good news that you have already forgiven us, and it is out of the gratefulness of our hearts that we get to live these lives.
Lord, we pray that you would empower us, and call us to live faithful and integral lives. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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