

PSALM 26

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 26

Psalm of David

The occasion of this psalm seems to be the quarrel between Saul and David, the former listening to calumnies and reproaches cast upon the latter, and persecuting him in a violent manner. The argument of it is the same, in a great measure, with the seventh psalm, and is an appeal made to God, the Judge of the whole earth, by the psalmist, for his innocence and integrity; Theodoret thinks it was written by David when he fled from Saul.

Ver. 1. *Judge me, O Lord*, etc.] Meaning not that God would enter into judgment with him, in respect to the justification of his person in his sight, which he knew was not by his own righteousness and integrity, but by the righteousness of God; but his view is, to the justification of his cause before men; and particularly to the difference between Saul and him; and entreats that God would interpose, take his cause in hand, judge between them, and vindicate him;

for I have walked in mine integrity; or “perfection”^{f408} not that he thought himself free from sin; this would be contrary to the complaints, confessions, and petitions frequently made by him; but that in the affair with which he was accused, of seeking Saul’s harm, (~~1~~1 Samuel 24:9); he was quite innocent: by his “integrity” he means the purity of his intentions and designs; the uprightness of his conduct, the simplicity and sincerity of his conduct towards all men, and especially his fidelity to his prince; but though he knew nothing by himself, and could not charge himself with any wrong action in this respect, and therefore ought to be acquitted before men; yet he did not expect hereby to be justified in the sight of God;

I have trusted also in the Lord; not in himself, in the sincerity of his heart, and the uprightness of his life; nor did he trust to the goodness of his cause; but he committed it to the Lord, who judgeth righteously; and trusted in him that he should not be ashamed and confounded: this shows from

whence his integrity sprung, even from faith unfeigned; for, where that is true and genuine, there are works of righteousness, and integrity of life;

[therefore] I shall not slide; these words may be connected with the former, thus; “I have trusted also in the Lord, that I shall not slide”^{f409}; that is, shall not fail in judgment, or lose the cause; but shall stand and carry it, and not be confounded or condemned. Our version supplies the word “therefore”, making these words to be an inference from the former, that because he trusted in the Lord, therefore he should not slide, slip, and fall; not but that true believers may not only have their feet well nigh slipped, but altogether; yea, fall, and that sometimes into great sins, to the breaking of their bones; but then they shall not totally and finally fall; for they stand by faith, and are kept through it by the power of God. The words may be considered as a prayer, “let me not slide”^{f410}; being sensible of his own weakness, and of the necessity of being upheld in his uprightness, and in the ways of the Lord by him, that his footsteps might not slip; for though he walked in his uprightness, he was not self-sufficient and self-confident, but dependent on the Lord.

Ver. 2. *Examine me, O Lord*, etc.] His cause, his integrity, and trust in the Lord, as silver and gold are examined by the touchstone, the word of God, which is the standard of faith and practice;

and prove me; or “tempt me”^{f411}; as Abraham was tempted by the Lord; and his faith in him, and fear of him, and love to him, were proved to be true and genuine;

try my reins and my heart; the thoughts, desires, and affections of it, as gold and silver are tried in the furnace; and so God sometimes tries the faith and patience of his people by afflictive providences; and this examination, probation, and trial, are made by him, not for his own sake, who knows the hearts and ways of all men; but for the sake of others, to make known either to themselves or others the truth of grace that is in them, and the uprightness of their hearts and ways; and it was on this account the psalmist desired to pass under such an examination.

Ver. 3. *For thy lovingkindness [is] before mine eyes*, etc.] The special lovingkindness of God, shown in the choice of him in Christ, in the provision of a Saviour for him, and in the effectual calling of him; which lovingkindness is unmerited, free, and sovereign, is from everlasting and to everlasting; it is better than life, excellent beyond expression, and

marvellous: and this may be said to be “before [his] eyes”; because it was now in sight; he had a comfortable view of interest in it, and was persuaded nothing should separate him from it; it was upon his heart, shed abroad in it, and he was affected with it; it was in his mind, and in his thoughts, and they were employed about it; he had it in remembrance, and was comfortably refreshed with it: and this he mentions as the reason of his laying his cause before the Lord, as the ground of his trust in him, and why he desired to be examined, proved, and tried by him;

and I have walked in thy truth; by faith in Christ, who is the truth of all promises, prophecies, types, and figures; in the word of truth, by abiding by it, and walking according to it; and in the truth of worship, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord; and to walk herein he used himself to, and was constant in, as the word ^{f412} signifies: and nothing more engages to walk on in Christ, as he has been received and to walk as becomes his Gospel, and in all holy conversation and godliness, than the love of God manifested to the soul; this being set continually before our eyes encourages faith and hope, and influences a holy life and cheerful obedience to the will of God.

Ver. 4. *I have not sat with vain persons*, etc.] Or “men of vanity” ^{f413}; who are full of it; who are addicted to the vanities of the world; who pursue the riches, honours, pleasures, and profits of it; which is no other than walking in a vain show: whose thoughts, words, and actions are vain; who are vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind, and walk in the vanity of it; who take the name of God in vain, and whose common discourse is foolish, frothy, light, and empty; and who are men of a vain conversation, and are rash, imprudent, and deceitful: men of bad principles may very well go by this name, who are vain and unruly talkers, and whose doctrines are doctrines of vanity, and no other than vain babbling; and also men guilty of idolatrous practices, who observe lying vanities, and worship them, and lift up their souls unto them; with such vain men, in any of these senses, the psalmist would have nothing to do; he would not keep company with them, nor have any communion, consultation, and conversation with them; it may be, he may have some respect to the men that were about Saul, to whom such a character agreed; or he may say this, and what follows, to remove a calumny cast upon him and his friends; as if they that were with him were such men as here described, and in (¹⁹²¹⁵ Psalm 26:5);

neither will I go in with dissemblers: or “hidden” or “unknown” persons ^{f414}, who lie in private lurking places, to murder the innocent, or secretly take away the good names and characters of men, and it is not known who they are; or who commit sin secretly; go into secret places to do their works in the dark, and hide themselves to do evil; as the Targum, Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, interpret it; who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; or who cover themselves with lying and flattering words, that it is not known what their real intentions be; they speak one thing, and mean another; are an assembly of treacherous men: such are all deceitful workers, who lie in wait to deceive, and walk in craftiness; and hypocrites, who have the form of religion, but are strangers to the power of it; and who are to be turned away from, and avoided; the houses, assemblies, cabals, and company of such, are to be shunned; (see ~~4406~~ Genesis 49:6 ~~2490~~ Jeremiah 9:2); or such as are “signed”, or “marked”; that is, infamous persons ^{f415}.

Ver. 5. *I have hated the congregation of evildoers*, etc.] That do harm to the persons, characters, or properties of men; and who meet together in bodies, to consult and form schemes to do mischief, and have their assemblies to encourage each other in it; these, their works and actions, the psalmist hated, though not their persons; and showed his displicency at them, and dislike and disapprobation of them, by absenting from them; (see ~~2457~~ Jeremiah 15:17);

and will not sit with the wicked; ungodly and unrighteous men, sons of Belial; for with such what fellowship and concord can there be? (~~4064~~ 2 Corinthians 6:14,15); the word ^{f416} signifies restless and uneasy persons, who cannot rest unless they do mischief; are like the troubled sea, continually casting up mire and dirt, (~~2570~~ Isaiah 57:20,21); now, by all this the psalmist means not that good men should have no manner of conversation with the men of the world: for then, as the apostle says, we must needs go out of the world, (~~4150~~ 1 Corinthians 5:9,10). Conversation in civil things, in matters of trade and business, is lawful; though all unnecessary conversation in things of civil life is to be shunned; no more should be had than what natural relation and the business of life require; but all conversation in things criminal is to be avoided; company is not to be kept with them, so as to join them in anything sinful; this is to harden them in their evil ways, and it brings into danger and into disgrace: a man is known and is judged of by the company that he keeps; and evil communications corrupt good manners.

Ver. 6. *I will wash my hands in innocency*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “among innocent persons”; men of a holy harmless life and conversation; with these he determined to converse in common, and not with such as before described; or the sense is, that he would wash his hands, in token of his innocence, integrity, and uprightness, he had before spoke of, and of his having nothing to do with such evil men as now mentioned; (see ^{<B206>}Deuteronomy 21:6,7 ^{<A274>}Matthew 27:24); “hands” are the instrument of action, and to “wash” them may design the performance of good works, (^{<B300>}Job 9:30); and to do this “in innocency”, or “purity”, may signify the performance of them from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; and particularly may have some respect to the lifting up of holy hands in prayer to God, previous to public worship; there seems to be an allusion to the priests washing their hands before they offered sacrifice, (^{<D209>}Exodus 30:19-21);

so will I compass thine altar, O Lord; frequent the house of God, where the altar was, and constantly attend the worship and ordinances of God; the work of the altar being put for the whole of divine service; the altar of burnt offering is here meant, which was a type of Christ; (see ^{<S130>}Hebrews 13:10); reference is had to the priests at the altar, who used to go round it, when they laid the sacrifice on the altar, and bound it to the horns of it, at the four corners, and there sprinkled and poured out the blood; compare (^{<B400>}Psalms 43:4); in order to which they washed their hands, as before; and in later times it was usual with the Heathens ^{f417} to wash their hands before divine service.

Ver. 7. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving*, etc.] Or “cause to hear with the voice of confession” ^{f418}: the meaning is, that the view of the psalmist, in compassing the altar of God in the manner he proposed, was not to offer upon it any slain beast; but to offer the sacrifices of praise upon that altar, which sanctifies the gift, and from whence they come with acceptance to God; even for all mercies, both temporal and spiritual, and that with a confession and acknowledgment of sin and unworthiness; all this is agreeable to the will of God; it is well pleasing in his sight, what glorifies him, and is but our reasonable service;

and tell of all thy wondrous works; of creation and providence; and especially of grace and redemption; this is the business of saints in God’s house below, and will be their employment in heaven to all eternity. Jarchi

on the place says, that this song of praise has in it what relates to future times, to Gog, to the days of the Messiah, and to the world to come.

Ver. 8. *Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house*, etc.] Meaning the tabernacle, for as yet the temple was not built; which was an habitation for the saints, where they chose to dwell, and reckoned it their happiness, and was the habitation of the Lord himself: the sanctuary was built for that purpose; and between the cherubim, over the mercy seat, he took up his residence; hence it follows,

and the place where thine honour dwelleth: or “glory”^{f419}: when the tabernacle was set up, the glory of the Lord filled it, as it did the temple, when it was dedicated, (^{<1248>}Exodus 40:35). The psalmist expresses his love to this place, in opposition to the, congregation of evildoers, which he hated, (^{<1248>}Psalm 26:5); and to remove a calumny from him, that being among the Philistines, and at a distance from the house of God, his affections were alienated from it; whereas it was his greatest concern that he was debarred the privileges of it; (see ^{<1248>}Psalm 42:1,2 63:1) (^{<1248>}1 Samuel 26:19); besides, he had showed his great regard to it by his constant attendance before his exile, as he did after it, (^{<1248>}Psalm 42:3 55:14); and it was out of pure love to the worship of God, and with real pleasure and delight, that he did attend; and not through custom, and in mere form, (^{<1248>}Psalm 122:1 84:1,2,10). The Lord’s house is loved by his people, because of his word and ordinances, which are ministered there, and because of his presence in it: or else what was typified by the tabernacle in here designed; either the tabernacle of Christ’s human nature, called the true tabernacle, (^{<1248>}Hebrews 8:2); in which the fulness of the Godhead dwells; which the Son of God, the brightness of his Father’s glory, inhabits; and in the redemption and salvation wrought out in it the glory of all the divine attributes is displayed; and Christ incarnate is the mercy seat from which God communes with his people, and is their way of access unto him, and whereby they have fellowship with him; and who is loved by the saints sincerely, above all creatures and things, and in the most ardent and affectionate manner: or heaven itself, of which the tabernacle was a figure, (^{<1248>}Hebrews 9:24); which is the habitation of the holiness and glory of God, and in which are many mansions or dwelling places for his people; and is the continuing city they seek, the heavenly and better country they are desirous of, and where their hearts and affections are; because there their God, their Saviour, and their treasure be; which sense seems to be confirmed by what follows.

Ver. 9. *Gather not my soul with sinners*, etc.] Profligate and abandoned ones, such as are notoriously profane, and who live and die impenitent ones; otherwise all men are sinners: the sense is, either that he desires that he might not, by any means, be brought into the company of such persons, be joined unto them, and have a conversation with them, which would be uncomfortable, dishonourable, and dangerous; or that God would not destroy him with them; and that he might not die the death of the wicked, nor be gathered with them at death: death is often expressed by a man's being gathered to his people, and to his fathers; (see ^{<1221>}2 Kings 22:20); the body is gathered to the grave, the soul returns to God that gave it, and has its place assigned by him; the souls of the righteous are gathered into heaven, Christ's garner; the souls of the wicked into hell; the psalmist deprecates being gathered with them;

nor my life with bloody men; that thirst after blood, lie in wait for it, shed it, and are drunk with it, as the antichristian party; these God abhors and detests; nor shall they live out half their days, and their end is miserable.

Ver. 10. *In whose hands [is] mischief*, etc.] Every abominable wickedness; as idolatry, adultery, murder, etc. the word signifies and is sometimes used for mischief conceived in the mind, artificially devised and contrived there; here mischief committed, the hand being the instrument of action, and intends whatever is prejudicial to the person, character, and properties of men;

and their right hand is full of bribes; whereby the eyes of judges are blinded, the words of the righteous perverted, men's persons respected, and judgment wrested, (^{<5169>}Deuteronomy 16:19).

Ver. 11. *But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity*, etc.] In which he had hitherto walked, (^{<4911>}Psalms 26:1); or it may express his faith, that after he was gathered by death he should walk in uprightness and righteousness, in purity and perfection, with Christ in white, and behold the face of God in righteousness; (see ^{<2501>}Isaiah 57:1,2);

redeem me; from the vain conversation of the wicked, from all troubles, and out of the hands of all enemies;

and be merciful unto me; who was now in distress, being persecuted by Saul, and at a distance from the house of God: this shows that mercy is the source and spring of redemption, both temporal and spiritual; and that the psalmist did not trust in and depend upon his present upright walk and

conversation, but in redemption by Christ, and upon the mercy of God in Christ.

Ver. 12. *My foot standeth in an even place*, etc.] Or “in a plain”^{f420}; in a sure place; on Christ the sure foundation, and who is the plain way and path to eternal life; (see ^{<4971>}Psalm 27:11); or in the ways and worship of God, prescribed by his word; and so denotes steadfastness and continuance in them;

in the congregations will I bless the Lord; in the assemblies of the saints, in the churches of Christ below, and in the great congregation above, in the general assembly and church of the firstborn; where it is the work of saints now, and will be hereafter, to praise the Lord, for all his mercies temporal and spiritual.