

---

# The Pilgrim's Tested Integrity

Psalm 26<sup>15</sup>

*Russ Kennedy*

I think one of the hardest things to bear is to have our integrity questioned without a cause.

In business life where deal goes bad, a relationship is soured, a customer attacks...

In home life where a spouse, a parent, a teen challenges your honesty...

In church life where your integrity in the Word or ministry is challenged...

Many of you have experienced this.

It is hard when wicked people attack us...

It is so difficult when someone we love and trust does so...

Sometimes, we have given them cause.

Our actions...

Our words...

A misunderstanding...

But when we are innocent, how do we respond?

As you can imagine a King has many enemies and will have his motives and honesty, his integrity questioned often. This Psalm is a praise and worship song of vindication. We praise and pray that our integrity will be upheld for the glory of God.

---

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**In the Past****(v.1-3)**

*God's people are careful to guard and confirm their integrity.*

The Psalm opens with a look back and closes with a look forward. In both, the pilgrim asserts their integrity.

- <sup>1</sup> Vindicate me, O Lord,  
for I have walked in my integrity,  
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.  
<sup>2</sup> Prove me, O Lord, and try me;  
test my heart and my mind.  
<sup>3</sup> For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
and I walk in your faithfulness.

Sometimes the way David talks is striking.

**Vindicate me****(v.1)**

This is his request. It is almost a demand. "God, please stand up for me."

Could we ask this of God like the Psalmist does? Maybe if we:

- Have lived our lives with real integrity...  
Have trusted the Lord with fidelity...

**Test me****(v.2-3)**

This is bold. It might sound prideful. But a clear conscience gives great confidence. Would you have the courage and confidence to say this to God? Put me to the test and see if what I say is true.

His reasons are quite a surprise. God, test me, try me, because:

- I am always gazing at your unfailing love...  
I am always walking in your unending faithfulness...

Do you see it? He is confident that God's scrutiny of his life will stand up *because of the character of God*. Our integrity is not self generated. It is not rooted primarily in your being sure that every word, every deed, every agreement, every relationship is totally honest. That is a vain and empty pursuit. Integrity will vanish under that kind of scrutiny. Only honesty, integrity and purity that flow out of God-centeredness will stand up under the pressure of man and the scrutiny of God.

**In our Relationships****(v.4-5)**

*God's people understand how to maintain integrity in their relationships.*

Notice the similarity with Psalm 1. Like the blessed one there, we are careful in our associations and our relationships. I wonder why no one has written a worship chorus around this stanza? I would sound very, very odd in our ears. But that is a problem with us, not with the text.

<sup>4</sup> I do not sit with men of falsehood,  
nor do I consort with hypocrites.  
<sup>5</sup> I hate the assembly of evildoers,  
and I will not sit with the wicked.

Godly integrity not only affirms things, but it avoids certain kinds of people.

### **Avoid two kinds of interactions:**

David highlights two ways in which we maintain our integrity.

WE DO NOT SIT WITH LIARS. What does that mean? To sit in the Old Testament usually spoke of sitting at meal in fellowship. It was thought of as signifying relationship and approval. David is saying that to have personal integrity, you cannot have relationships with people of no integrity. Let's state this in the opposite: suppose you said to someone, "No, I will not go to that meeting with you. You are not a person of integrity. If am there, people will think that you are honest or that I am not." Is there any situation you can think of in which you would say that? Then I don't think you can sing the first phrase of this stanza.

WE DO NOT HANG OUT WITH HYPOCRITES. Now, there are a lot of people who feel that the church is full of hypocrites. I get that. I would entirely agree. It is possible that some of you are not really what you appear to be on Sunday morning. You have a veneer of spirituality but not its reality. You know it. People who know you well know it. So don't be surprised if there are earnest, genuine Christians in this congregation who will not "hang out" with you.

What about the word, "hate" here? Look at its opposite. "I love the assembly of the righteous; but I hate the assembly of the wicked." So, there are lots of ways wicked people congregate together for the purpose of furthering their evil words and deeds. Some of those assemblies are even religious assemblies. If David can look out over the nation of Israel and say, "I hate it when the worshippers of Baal get together", then should we have stronger emotional reactions to the gathering together of evil people, even evil religious people, to further their evil words and deeds? Yes. And in many countries and in some places in America, to say what David says

### **Avoid two kinds of people:**

David speaks of avoiding two categories, two kinds of people.

People with integrity avoid THOSE WHO ARE OVERT LIARS. Untrustworthy people will think nothing of attacking and destroying your integrity. Liars usually assume that everyone else is lying as well.

People with integrity avoid THOSE WHO ARE OPENLY WICKED. People who little or no moral grounding pose significant challenges.

Illustrate with situation in Romania for Christian businessmen.

Now, none of this precludes have gospel contact with liars, hypocrites and openly wicked people. But that gospel contact has to uphold the integrity of the message as well as that of the messenger.

## For our Worship

(v.6-7)

*God's people understand the importance of integrity for our worship.*

David led the praise and worship of Israel. He wrote much of her songbook. He was often in the forefront with the choirs and the chief musician. And he understand and declared the importance of the integrity for worship.

<sup>6</sup> I wash my hands in innocence  
and go around your altar, O Lord,  
<sup>7</sup> proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,  
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

We have to understand that the actions spoken in this stanza reflect the worship of the Old Covenant. There were many public symbolic acts which were to show inward spiritual realities.

### Purity as we Worship

This public act of washing the hands had three important spiritual significances:

When we gather to worship, we can have a clear conscience so that our worship is authentic. This act was a declaration of innocence of guilt. Pilate used this symbol to try to absolve himself of participation in the sin of executing Jesus. David is using the symbol to say he has a clear conscience.

When we gather to worship, we can have a sense of having been forgiven and cleansed of our sins. Since we all sin, the way to a clear conscience is through repentance, confession and forgiveness.

When we gather in worship, we must have a sense of authenticity and sincerity. God hates hypocrisy. He knows full well what is actually in our hearts. He is insulted that we think our religious veneer is not visible to Him. We think we are doing our dance of worship in front of a thick curtain not realizing that it is transparent to God's gaze. So we may fool people, but you cannot fool God. So we must come to worship with a sense of genuine authenticity and sincerity.

### Proclamation in our Worship

David now comes to or marches around the altar praising and proclaiming what God has done. What altar is this? This is the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard of the temple. What a picture this is. David, the king, the worship leader, the Psalmist, is walking (maybe even skipping and dancing - could it be?) around the altar. As he goes he is saying and singing the mighty works God has done. He is qualified to do so because his conscience is clear and transgressions forgiven. He is a man of integrity. So he can proclaim to all the people the works of God.

So pilgrims are concerned about integrity and sincerity in their worship. The proclamation of the good works of God from the lying lips of dishonest people who are hypocrites just isn't what pleases or praises God.

## **With our Deliverance**

**(v.8-10)**

This stanza poses a challenge. What is the relationship between verse 8 and verses 9-10?

<sup>8</sup> O Lord, I love the habitation of your house  
and the place where your glory dwells.

<sup>9</sup> Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,  
nor my life with bloodthirsty men,

<sup>10</sup> in whose hands are evil devices,  
and whose right hands are full of bribes.

*God's people praise and pray that the place where God dwells will be the place of their deliverance.*

## **God's Dwelling Place**

**(v. 8)**

He recognizes that when he moves toward the place where God dwells he is moving to a place of safety. In David's day it was the tabernacle in Jerusalem. For us, it is not geographical location, it is a spiritual position. God dwells among His people. Christ is the new tabernacle. But so are God's people. We are the place where God's glory dwells. That is what we are love and to long for.

Now it will manifest itself in loving and longing to be with God's people. That begins with assembling with and becoming part of a local church. It is useless to say, "I love the place where God dwells," if you do not love and long to be with God's people.

## **God's Delivering Power**

**(v. 9-10)**

Now the relationship is clear. Since God dwells, not in a tent, but among and with His people, then this prayer makes sense. To move towards God's people is to move away from wicked, evil people. To be near and with God's people is the place of refuge. It is there that God grants deliverance. The church as the people of God is a place of safety. The wicked may howl and rage against the city of God, but inside God's people are kept safe.

Outside is where judgment takes place. To be outside of the people of God and thus to be lost means judgment. The wicked will be swept away in the consequences of their own sin. They will be swept away finally in the condemnation of God's judgment. But we will be safe, hidden in Christ who has already taken the wrath of God for us.

Oh, how we love the pilgrim band moving towards the glorious home. Even in the wilderness of this world, we are safe as we move under the glory of God's presence, in the company of God's people sheltered by the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

**In the Future****(v.11-12)**

*God's people are committed to walking in integrity for the rest of their sojourn here.*

<sup>11</sup> But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;  
redeem me, and be gracious to me.

<sup>12</sup> My foot stands on level ground;  
in the great assembly I will bless the Lord.

We then make two great commitments to maintain our integrity:

**In the way I live****(v.11)**

No matter what others may do, the pilgrim commits to live with integrity. We do so because we are thus assured that God has redeemed us. We have confidence in His favor and enabling power to us. We are not living with integrity on the strength of our will and choice. We are dependent on the Lord who is weaving out the threads of our redemption according to His grace.

**In the way I stand****(v.12)**

I love the way David states. This is level ground. This is not a steep hillside where our footing is precarious and the dangers are great. This is the flat ground where the steps are easy and the walk is sure and steady.

And so, we bless and extol the Lord in the gatherings of His people. With honesty and integrity we live. With sincerity of heart we worship. With dependence on God we serve. With God's people we praise and glorify Him.

---

**Reflect and Respond**

God's people are careful to guard and confirm their integrity.

God's people understand how to maintain integrity in their relationships.

God's people understand the importance of integrity for our worship.

God's people praise and pray that the place where God dwells will be the place of their deliverance.

God's people are committed to walking in integrity for the rest of their sojourn here.

May we live and worship with integrity in company of pilgrims and for the glory of the Lord.