

PSALM 26 THE TESTIMONY OF A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

The distinguishing peculiarity of this Psalm, in the tone of its appeals, is that it dwells very much upon the righteousness of Jehovah's character. Having spoken so much, in the last Psalm, about the Lord's mercies; it was very fitting, in this one, to trace the channel through which these mercies flow down to sinners.

Although the words were written by David, we may see our Lord Jesus Himself speaking here – as well as all the members of His spiritual Body, the Church. We may behold Him teaching His people to take up His words, and address them to the Father in His name: “Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide” (verse 1). Who could so well have spoken these words as Christ Himself? And Who was better fitted than Him to say, as in verse 3, “Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.” He does not fear to invite this searching of heart and mind, for He knows the “lovingkindness” of the Lord; and He does not fear being driven from any favorite path that He is on, for His desire is to “walk habitually in his truth.” “I love the Father,” said Jesus (John 14:31). “I come to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). And we might thus go through the whole Psalm and show its application to Him. But in particular, we observe the words of verses 6 and 7: “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.” The meaning is that He will go round and round the altar of sacrifice – looking at the blood upon its base and upon each of its four horns, beholding the smoke of the fire, and think-

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

The sweet singer of Israel appears before us in this Psalm as one who is enduring reproach; in this, he was a picture of the Greater Son of David, as well as an encouraging example to us to carry the burden of slander to the throne of grace. It is possible that this appeal to heaven was written by David at the time of the assassination of Ish-bosheth by Baanah and Rechab, in order to protest his innocence of all participation in that treacherous murder.

Unity of subject is so distinctly maintained in this Psalm that there are no sharp divisions between sections. But David Dickson has given us an admirable summary in these words: “He appealeth to God, the supreme Judge, in the testimony of a good conscience, bearing him witness – first, of his endeavor to walk uprightly as a believer (verses 1-3); secondly, of his keeping himself from the contagion of the evil counsel, sinful courses, and example of the wicked (verses 4-5); thirdly, of his purpose still to behave himself holily and righteously, out of love to the partaker of the public privileges of the Lord's people in the congregation (verses 6-8). Whereupon he prayeth to be free of the judgment coming upon the wicked (verses 9-10), according as he had purposed to eschew their sins (verse 11); and he closeth his prayer with comfort and assurance of being heard (verse 12).”

ing of the sacrificial victim that had died there. And He will do this in the way of joyful thanksgiving for salvation provided for mankind! These verses are a survey of redemption-work, taken by the Redeemer; and every member of His Body may also take such a survey after feeling the power of free forgiveness, and



while aiming at “innocency.” This “compassing” of the altar takes place after pardon.

Jesus loved the types and foreshadows that were presented in the Temple and its ceremonial symbols and worship because they showed forth pictures of His own work. “Lord,” He says, “I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth” (verse 8) – that is, the place where His glory dwelt, and where God was shown to be both just and gracious. He hated the thought of sin, and is not this the feeling of every member of His Body? Although He was “numbered with transgressors” in His death, His conscience was clean and He was innocent of any participation in their iniquity and guilt (verses 9-10). And do we not join in the resolution and prayer of verse 11? “As for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me!”

We consider verse 12 as an anticipation of the future. Although “the even place” may be a reference to the present sure standing of the soul in God’s love, it seems to be primarily speaking of the place of everlasting security, where no further danger of falling shall occur. In any case, the words – “in the congregations will I bless the Lord” – point farther than to the assemblies of God’s people on earth. However pleasant these may be, they are only a foreshadowing of something even better! Our gatherings on earth are only shadows of those multitudes – “numbers without number” – in the heavenly Kingdom. Our united voices of praise here on earth are only the prelude to the anthems that shall arise from countless multitudes of sweet voices singing with joy, when the Lord shall have gathered home His great multitude that no man can number. But until that happy day dawns, let us use this Psalm in order to fully enter into sympathy with the appeals of the Righteous One and the members of His spiritual Body.

O Lord God! We pray for grace to continually rest our souls upon Christ’s perfect Sacrifice, and to surround Your altar with humble hope; for then we may rest assured that we shall never be gathered with the wicked! Amen.