

## Psalm 26, A Prayer For Vindication

We all need vindication at one time or another. You either have needed it or you will.

Tony's antagonist.

Joe's criticism after being nominated for elder.

Vindication is the subject of this Psalm. David is asking God to vindicate him.

I'm going to use vindication and justification as synonyms.

CAVEAT! It's a mistake to ask God to vindicate just criticisms that we rationalize. Bob criticized me for not listening.

God only vindicates unjust criticisms.

This Psalm is about the need for vindication from *unjust* criticism. It has four movements:

- Vindication
- Justification
- Separation
- Determination

### **A. VINDICATION**

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

This is a prayer. David asks God to vindicate him, i.e., *“Make it clear to others that I was not in the wrong.”*

David has been treated unjustly by King Saul and others.

Even though David was Saul’s most loyal supporter, Saul wickedly criticized, slandered, and pursued David for over ten years.

Saul returned David’s kindness with malice, hatred and jealousy.

Twice God delivered Saul into David’s hands, but David refused to lay his hand on the Lord’s Anointed.

- The cave of Adullam
- Asleep at night

Despite this, Saul continued to return David’s kindness and loyalty with a ruthless attempt to hunt him down and kill him. Jealousy and selfish ambition dominate Saul. “For where Jealousy and selfish ambition exist there will be disorder and every vile practice” (Jam. 3:16).

David's cousin, Joab, the commander of Israel's army, ignored David's commands and wishes and murdered Abner in cold blood.

So, David asks God to vindicate him.

It is important to note, however, that David assumes he is not objective about his motives and deeds. So in verse 2 he asks God to "*prove me...and try me; test my heart and my mind.*" He knows that he is proud and self-centered, so he is suspicious of his motives. He doesn't trust himself to be objective about himself.

Have you ever prayed for vindication? Sometimes it is proper to do so.

A spouse has been unfaithful, then blamed you?

A friend has betrayed you for something you didn't do?

A child has rejected you unfairly? Franky Schaeffer.

You've been unjustly slandered in the media.

A relative has rejected you because of your Christianity? You've been called a bigot, a hater, a white supremacist, a Nazi, a misogynist, a homophobic, transphobic, etc. If you haven't you will be.

## ***B. SELF-JUSTIFICATION***

4 I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. 5 I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. 6 I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, 7 proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds. 8 O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

David is not saying that his behavior vindicates or justifies him before God.

Last Summer we studied Psalm 14. There David clearly states his guilt before God.

"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." (Psalm 14:1-3).

No, David is saying, compared to other people, the best I know how, I have done right. In other words, I have a clear conscience. Despite this he still wants God to search him for sin.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (Psalm 139:23).

Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. (Psalm 19:12–13).

The apostle Paul spoke the same way. Here is how he responded to the accusation that he was a false apostle.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Corinthians 4:3–5).

### ***C. SEPARATION***

**9** Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, **10** in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes.

It's OK to pray this way.

What is David asking God to do? He is asking God to treat him differently than bloodthirsty men who work evil and manipulate others with bribes.

In other words, although before God no one is righteous, not one, the virtuous humble themselves, admit that they are sinners, cry out for God's grace, and seek to live righteously. God accepts them on Christ's merits.

By contrast, the wicked feel no need for God. They do not seek to please him. They live dominated by their lusts and passions.

David is saying, "Distinguish between these two groups of people. Separate me from them. Treat me differently."

God will respond to this prayer.

What is the application for us? Persecution is coming. Many of you might pray this way before you die. You might need this Psalm.

God eventually vindicated David. He heard David's prayer.

On Mt. Gilboa, the Philistines killed Saul. Israel and Judah brought Saul's crown to David and asked him to be king.

So far we've described three movements in this Psalm. Vindication, Justification, and Separation.

#### ***D. DETERMINATION***

11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. 12 My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

Here is David's summary/ conclusion. God, no matter how you answer this prayer, I am determined to walk in integrity.

In other words, whether you vindicate me in this life or the next I will continue to follow you.

#### ***E. APPLICATION***

*1. Be suspicious of yourself. God doesn't vindicate those whose arrogance has blinded them from an inability to see their culpability.*

*2. With regard to people, God vindicates those who walk in integrity, with a clear conscience.*

Some will be vindicated in this world.

All will be vindicated in the world to come. Christ will vindicate perfectly based on omniscience and omnipotence.

*3. Christ is the greater David.*

This Psalm finds its full expression in Christ, David's son.

The same jealousy and selfish ambition that motivated Saul also motivated the Pharisees.

That is why the Jewish people returned Christ's kindness and love with crucifixion.

They slandered him. "He casts out demons by the power of Satan."

They said, "All of claims are lies."

What did he claim? Jesus claimed to be God's Son. He claimed to be "the Son of Man." He claimed to be the great "I am." He let people worship him. He claimed the Messianic identity. If he died none of these claims were true. He was a sinner just like you and me.

He died completely unvindicated.

His death said the Pharisees were right. He was a sinner. He lied.

However, in his humanity, Jesus knew with great confidence that that God would vindicate him.

Isaiah 50 describes Jesus giving himself up to crucifixion. Then it ends with Christ's powerful words.

“But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? (Isaiah 50:7–8).

How did God vindicate this greater David? As we have already noted, he died looking totally unvindicated. This means that you might die looking unvindicated also.

**But, on the third day, God vindicated his Son by raising him from the dead.** Jesus was “vindicated by the Spirit” 1 Tim. 3:16.

When the HS raised Christ his vindication became your vindication and mine.

“[Righteousness] will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:24–25).

Christ’s resurrection doesn’t necessarily vindicate us before people.

It provides us with the one great and essential vindication we all desperately need—vindication before Christ’s throne of judgment.

In your place Jesus died condemned. He died unvindicated.

Jesus took the condemnation that we deserve so that we can receive the vindication that he deserves.

***F. IN SUMMARY***

Vs 1-3 Vindication: David asks God to vindicate him. God eventually answers David's prayer.

Vs. 4-8 Justification: With regard to people, David justifies himself. He establishes his innocence relative to his persecutors.

Vs 9-10 Separation: He asks God to separate him from evil-doers and treat him differently.

Vs 11-12 Determination: He commits to a virtuous life no matter how God answers.

Conclusion: If God loves you and me so much that Jesus was willing to die unvindicated in our place, surely he will vindicate us before our accusers.

Wait for the Lord. His vindication is surely coming.