

The Walk of Integrity

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That's a wonderful song to introduce our text for this evening, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," because as we go into Psalm 26 we find the king of Israel, we find David, anchoring his hope in the faithfulness of God and the fact that God sees and God knows and that is the basis for David's hope and so we are delighted to be able to open Psalm 26 with you here this evening and I trust that it's going to be a great encouragement to you as the Psalms always are, the hymnbook of Israel. And what it has for us here this evening is going to be a great blessing to you, especially if you find yourself in the circumstance of life where you're encountering some, what you believe to be, unjust human opposition perhaps to your life, perhaps from family or friends or at work, and you're struggling with relationships of people who are opposed to you and maybe you don't have an ear to hear your appeal. I've been in circumstances like that where it seemed like people were lined up against me and there was no one to appeal to and the frustration of that and the sense of lack of control in that is difficult at one level. But beloved, what I would want you to see and what we always need to come back to is that when we find ourselves in those helpless impossible situations, understand that what is given to you there, God has providentially given to you something to help you grow in your faith, to help you flourish and to develop a deeper walk with him and that's what we find here in Psalm 26. David has encountered human opposition of some manner as he was writing this Psalm and he throws himself onto God's protection. He has no one else to appeal to and he throws himself on the mercy and the protection of God and as he does, it has a purifying impact on him. As he throws himself on God's protection, it gives him an opportunity to reflect and to examine his life and having done that, he is able to make certain bold assertions before the throne of God in which he appeals to the great faithfulness of God to act on his behalf. What underlies this Psalm is that David is resting in the fact that God knows what David is saying is true. What David asserts about his life is something that he is confident that God is aware of that and because God knows that, David can appeal to God's other attribute, one of his other attributes that, "Because you know in your attribute of faithfulness to me, save me, help me, vindicate me, show my innocence in this difficult circumstance." And the consequence of the walk of integrity is the theme of this Psalm.

Look at verse 1 and I just want you to see the walk of integrity as the central theme here in this Psalm. In verse 1 and we'll come back to it, David says, "Vindicate me, O LORD," why? "Because I have walked in my integrity." Verse 3, "I have walked in Your truth." Verse 11, he looks to the future and says, "I shall walk in my integrity." And so you find

in this text the fact that David is mindful of his walk, his conduct of life, and he says, "Lord, I've walked in integrity before you and therefore please be faithful to me and take note of my walk so that you would deliver me from this situation."

With that overview, let's see tonight how the integrity of David informed his trust in God because there is a very clear theme that comes through in the Psalm. First of all, we want to see how David makes his plea of integrity. The plea of integrity, that's the first point if you're taking notes here this evening. David pleads his integrity and he asks God to act with justice. Look at verse 1 now as we dive into the text here this evening. David says,

1 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

So right from the start, he's making a plea for God to manifest the fact that David is innocent in this situation, whatever the situation was that he was facing. David says, "God, you are sovereign over these situations. You are sovereign over these people. You are sovereign over my life and you know the reality of this situation and I ask you based on what you know to be true, to act on my behalf and to help me and to show forth and manifest my innocence in this situation."

When he says that he has walked in integrity, understand that David is not claiming to be sinless here and you can see that in the text. Later on in verse 11 he says, "be gracious to me." So don't make the mistake of thinking that David is making a self-righteous boast here or that he is somehow proclaiming a perfection about his life, that's not the point. Rather what he is saying is that there is integrity in his life before God. There is a sincerity. There is a whole-heartedness in the way that he has walked with God and whatever the imperfections of that may be, David is saying, "Lord, you know the overall direction and the sincerity in the direction of my life. Take note of that and in your covenant faithfulness as Yahweh, in your loyal love, help me in this situation."

The word "walk" here is a figurative way of expressing motion. The word "walk" is a word for "movement" and David here is using it to express the pursuit of life in response to divine principles. He says, "Lord, I am walking in response to your word. I am walking in response to your covenant. I am walking in response to your revelation. I am seeking to be obedient, a man of faith, a man of integrity here and that is the tenor and the tone of my life." He says that, "My life has unfolded in overall obedience to your truth. What he's asking for then as he goes on in verse 2, he asks God to test that claim and make his innocence obvious. Verses 2 and 3, look at it with me. He says,

2 Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart. 3 For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

Notice what he's appealing here and, you know, I'm just so grateful. I know most of you are here week after week and we get to see these repeated themes over and over again, to just see the depth of this Psalm. To see the depth of what David is saying. This is no superficial external conduct of life that he's talking about. Look at verse 2 with me,

"Examine," try, test, what? "My mind and my heart." He's saying, "Lord, test my inner man. Test my affections. Test my priorities. Test that which I love and see if you don't find there the heart of a man who is walking in sincere devotion to you." That request has profound depth. He opens his affections and his priorities and his conscience for God to search and to refine.

Now, you know, one of the many things that I love about us going through the Psalms is that they so quickly take us out of an external superficial approach to biblical living to that which merely men can see or that which is just based on superficial conduct and checking off the marks of what you did or did not do during the day or showing up on Sunday perhaps when your heart wasn't really in it. We all know something about that, don't we? We show up to be with the people of God and yet our minds and our hearts are some place completely different. David says, "Lord, test my mind and my heart. Here's my inner man. Go through it with your searching spotlight and see if you don't find what I say to be true." One 19th century commentator says about this verse, he says, "David desires to keep nothing back. He will submit himself to the searching flame of the great Refiner that all dross of self-deception may be purged away."

Here's the thing, beloved: for you and me, this sets a standard for us. It sets an aspiration for us in the way that we approach our Christian living that we would not be satisfied with going through the motions. That we would not be content to simply let other people think the right things about us without a corresponding inner reality that burns with a flame of passion for the truth of God, for the character of God to be faithful to him. That there would be an inner drive, an inner motivation that is united in purpose to the holy gracious God of our salvation and that whatever flows from that would be that which God would find that the sympathies of our heart are engaged and that we're not simply in a mediocre way going through the motions. I invite you tonight to search your heart and to ask yourself, "Is my heart engaged in my Christian life? Is my heart engaged with a true love for Christ? For Christ crucified? For Christ risen? For Christ ascended? And that all of my affections belong to the realm of heaven and not to the things of this world?" Is your heart like that? I'm very grateful that you're here in the room. What I can't see and what no man can see is where your heart is at. What David is saying here is, "Lord, my heart is with you. Test that and see whether that is not the case."

Notice this, beloved. I can't prove this right now because I haven't thought through all of the Psalms or taught through all the Psalms in this way but time and time again as we go through each of these Psalms, you find in each individual Psalm if you think about them and work through what they're saying, you're finding a philosophy of life expressed in each Psalm. You're finding an entire way to approach and an entire way to think about life and the vertical dimension of walking with God Psalm by Psalm. They are so searching. They are so broad. They are so comprehensive and that's why I've tried to say in different ways that we need to think about the Psalms as so much more than that which can give us a little salve on our wound of a day and that which can help us through a hard day or a hard moment and you look for a verse that somehow warms your heart, whatever that means. If that's the way that we approach the Psalms, we're going to be very impoverished about what the Psalms are actually teaching because what you find

consistently Psalm by Psalm by Psalm is you're finding things that somehow in a Spirit-inspired brevity and yet depth, embrace the totality of life and as we go through these things and see them, we find these things again and again.

Verse 3 is another example of that. What is the ground of David's confidence as he appeals to God? What is it that he's grounding his hope in? Is it his own life? Ultimately is it his own integrity? No. No, that's not it. He's asserting, he's pleading his own integrity before the throne of God but look at what the ultimate final ground of his appeal is. Verse 3, "For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes." Your loyal love, Lord, is always at the forefront of my thinking. He says, "I have walked in Your truth." In other words, "I'm simply walking in response to what you have revealed about yourself. I have walked in your truth. My mind is anchored in the fact that you are a God of loyal faithful love and that is ever at the forefront of my thinking." That's what he's grounding it in. He's grounding it in God's revelation and in God's character and says, "My whole life is in response to that and it is because I am responding to you, you have first loved me and I am responding to you, Lord, that I have confidence that you will hear me with favor in this plea that I make." That is why he is confident. His way of life is grounded on God's truth.

Now, there are a lot of people who would say that about themselves that would never want to be caught dead in a church like this. "Well, I'm a man of God," or whatever and, you know, people say that so superficially. Well, the question might be then, "On what basis do you make that assertion? What is your proof that you're a man or a woman of God?" David did state his plea. He has made the plea of his integrity and now what we're going to find as we go on in verses 4 through 8 is that he is going to give the proof of his integrity. The proof of his integrity, that's our second point here this evening.

When David examined himself before David prayed, you know, all of David's prayers that we see recorded here, they are a reflection of meditations that were previously going on in his heart and David has examined himself before he articulated this prayer. What did he find as he examined himself? What is it that gave him confidence to assert his integrity before God? How did he prove it for those of you that like courtroom analogies. What evidence did he bring to bear before the bar of God, so to speak, and say, "Here is what I base my assertion of my integrity upon"? This is incredible. It's so rich and deep and profound and for all of us and especially for you young people, those of you that are in your pre-teen or early teenage years, what you find here set before you is something for you to think about now but also for you to set your aspirations in what lies ahead because what David says proves his integrity is by the kinds of people that he likes to hang out with. He says, "God, you can measure my life by the company I keep." Even the world says that, right? You can know a man by the company he keeps. You can read a lot about where a person is at in the life and in their affections by who they are attracted to and who their life attracts. There are more than a few of you in this room where I want to tell you that it's a great encouragement to me in my own walk to find that somehow in the grace of God in an unworthy man like me, I find people like you becoming my friends. When a man like you wants to be a friend with me, then I take encouragement from that.

I take a great encouragement day by day from the kinds of people that are attracted to the ministry of Truth Community Church.

That means the world to me because David says you can measure a man by the people that he knows and by those that he shares like affections with and there are two life habits that he brings into evidence before God to prove his integrity. There is a negative and there is a positive and this is what you see here in verse 4. Remember, he said, let's go back and remember. I want to keep the theme of the Psalm fresh in your mind. Look at verse 1 with me again. He says, "Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted in the LORD without wavering." Now, on a human level, we ask the question, "David, how do we know that? How do we know what you're saying is true? On what basis do you make that claim?" David says, "I'll tell you," in verse 4, first of all, look at verse 4 with me,

4 I do not sit with deceitful men, Nor will I go with pretenders. 5 I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked.

What David is saying here is, "You can know my integrity, God, by the fact that I don't associate and find companionship and likemindedness with those who hate you, who reject you, with hypocrites and evildoers. God, you can look at my life and see that I am not influenced by men who are opposed to you." David here is setting forth who he aligns with spiritually and David says, "I have not thrown my lot in with evil men who turn away from you, Yahweh. My lot is not aligned with those who maybe give lip-service to your word but whose hearts are far from you. You won't find me associating with churches that vaguely speak about the authority of the Bible but when it comes down to paying a price for integrity and faithfulness to it will run from the tenets of Scripture as quickly as they can. I know nothing about them. I don't belong to them. I don't associate with them. I don't support them. I don't lend my aid or presence to them. Lord, you know that to be true about me." You can measure a man by his associations and David says, "I haven't cast my lot in with sinners. I don't share in their approach."

You know, what would the evidence look like in your life if it was laid out who you hang out with in private? What would it look like? Would we find you with a companion of those who are comfortable in bars and places of ill repute? Where do you hang out on the internet if you want to get that personal about it? What books do you read? What video games do you play? Because all of that stuff is showing where you align yourself spiritually and when you are aligning yourself with wickedness in your private life, then that is giving you evidence of where your heart is really at even though you're here in the room tonight. That's a problem. That's a problem. On the other hand, when you find yourself comfortable in the presence of the people of God, when you find yourself glad to be with those who are walking with Christ and when people bring up Scripture and good doctrine and you say, "Oh, let me join in on that conversation!" you're showing where your alignments are.

So the associations that we make are speaking volumes about our hearts and David says, "Lord, you don't find me identifying with and receiving direction and shared priorities

with people who are opposed to you. God, you know that to be true. I trust you to see it and to vindicate me in this situation." So there is this negative aspect but he goes beyond this and the way that this works out is just a great encouragement to me and it just brings so much light to bear on things that you see going through life in Christian circles. David, on the one hand, has rejected evil men and he doesn't associate with them. On the other hand, he can say, "I have been faithful in worship and associating with the people of God."

Look at verse 6 with me. He says,

6 I shall wash my hands in innocence, And I will go about Your altar, O LORD,

The altar being the place of public worship in the day. The place where sacrifices were made. Where the people of God brought their sacrifices to confess their sins and to give thanks and to express their loyalty and their peace offerings before him in a public way. David says, "That's where I belong. That's where you find me, God, with the people of God."

To wash his hands. Washing hands was a ceremony of purification. It was a declaration in other settings of innocence. In other words, when he says that, "I wash my hands in innocence," he says, "My hands have not done that which brings guilt into my life. My hands are clean."

Then he declares his love for the public worship of God even in the midst of his troubles. "Oh, thank God that you're here." Even in the midst of his troubles and in the conflicts, David did not abandon public worship.

Look at verses 7 and 8. He says,

7 That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving And declare all Your wonders. 8 O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells.

"Lord, when the people of God are gathered together in this central meeting place of worship, I love to be there. That's where your glory dwells." In other words, that's where the character and the nature of God is made manifest is in the public worship offered by his people.

Notice the contrast. Notice the contrast. In verse 5 he says, "I hate the assembly of evildoers." Verse 8, "I love the habitation of your house." I hate that, I love this. Do you see how clearly defined, how clear his convictions are in his inner man? That the passion of clarity is defining to him? "I hate the idea of being assembled together with wicked men who want nothing to do with your truth, O God. Those who blaspheme your name or even worse, those hypocrites, those pretenders who give lip-service to your name but live in a completely different way. I hate being around people like that, O God. By contrast

when the truth is being proclaimed, when the word of God is being honored and obeyed, O God, I love to be there. I love to be where your people are gathered together in honor of your glory and in submission to your word. I love that," he says.

Now look, I know that's why most of you are here. You love it. Why else would you be at a place like this on Tuesday night? Well, thank God for that. What I want you to see is and what I want to reinforce in your tender godly hearts is this: David was clear in his heart commitments and one way that his devotion to God was manifested was that he delighted in being with the people of God in the public worship of God. That's one reason among 55,000 that it's important for you to be here on a regular consistent basis when we gather together for worship and if you want that list of 55,000, email me and I'll be up late trying to fill out that full list for you. It's hyperbole, okay? David says his physical presence in public worship displays the state of his heart. The virtue of his life produced a passion that could be stated, "I hate and I love."

Now listen to this. A pastor from probably about 200 years ago told this story which was preserved in Charles Spurgeon commentary on the Psalms. This is not Spurgeon speaking, he's quoting another man. He said, "I have in my congregation a worthy, aged woman, who has for many years been so deaf as not to distinguish the loudest sound, and yet she is always one of the first in the meeting. On asking the reason of her constant attendance (as it was impossible for her to hear my voice), she answered, 'Though I cannot hear you, I come to God's house because I love it, and would be found in his ways; and he gives me many a sweet thought upon the text when it is pointed out to me: another reason is, because there I am in the best company, in the more immediate presence of God, and among his saints, the honourable of the earth.'" She went on and said, "I am not satisfied with serving God in private; it is my duty and privilege to honour him regularly in public." The pastor concluded by saying this, he said, "What a reproof this is to those who have their hearing, and yet always come to a place of worship late, or not at all!"

Beloved, don't be misled. Don't be deceived by those who would put on an air of superiority and spirituality saying, "I worship God at home. I don't need the people of God. I'm with God in nature. I'm with God and I listen," or do whatever in home in private. That's not true. I know that a lot of people like to talk that way but they're deluded and they are self-deceived. The true people of God love to be with the people of God. There is an inner compulsion that says, "I need to be with God's people. I'm not content. I can't be satisfied alone. I want the fellowship of other men and women of God." Jesus said they will know you're Christians by the love that you have for one another. You can't manifest that sitting alone in your closet if that's all you do. The people who self-consciously and especially those who proudly separate themselves and stay alone, whatever else they're saying about themselves, they need to examine themselves to see if they're in the faith. How can you claim to belong to the people of God if you don't have any association or need or desire for the people of God? That doesn't make any sense. That's a complete contradiction in terms. That's an oxymoron. And to be able to say that to people like you who are faithful to come and be there is just a way of just affirming the

priorities that you manifest in your life. I'm grateful for you but I also don't want you to be deceived by those who would stand apart and make you think something different.

David says, here's the whole point of all of this, David says, "Lord, you can measure my integrity, you can measure the truthfulness of what I'm saying not by the fact that I hang out by myself but by the fact that I love to be around your altar with your people in the place of worship." That's a defining mark of a true man of God and that absence of that passion and that heart and that kind of engagement with the people of God is showing that something is profoundly wrong and I would not offer assurance of salvation to a well-bodied person who refuses to come together with the people of God whether it's with us, whether it's at Bible Chapel of Delhi Hills or some other place, some place, find the people of God and be with them and if the opportunities are there and you neglect it and don't care, what? What? What? Where is the integrity in that?

So David has appealed to God to recognize his integrity and he has illustrated it, he has proven it by his manner of life. "I separate from the wicked. I join together with the faithful." Now, with that said and having done this, what David now does is that he turns to prayer and so we see in the remaining verses the prayer from integrity. We saw the plea of integrity, the proof of integrity, now we're going to look here on our third point, the prayer from integrity and what does he pray? He asks God to spare him from the fate of sinners.

Look at verse 9 with me. He says,

9 Do not take my soul away along with sinners, Nor my life with men of
bloodshed, 10 In whose hands is a wicked scheme, And whose right hand
is full of bribes.

Notice that he's making a request here. This is his prayer now, having plead and proven his integrity, he prays. He says, "Lord, don't take my soul away along with sinners." And I don't think he's thinking so much in final judgment heaven and hell terms, although that would be a secondary application, it seems like he's speaking more in terms of the present circumstance that is prompting his prayer and he's asking God to separate him from the consequences that are going to come on them. In other words, "Vindicate me and bless me and protect me because I stand apart from these sinners."

So he's saying, "God, I honestly believe and I ask you that my fate, what happens to me in this circumstance, should be different than what happens to sinners." Why is that? On what basis does he assert that? Well, the whole point. He says, "God, don't treat me like them because I have separated myself from them. It would be unjust for me to feel their pains when I have consciously stood apart from them." So he says, "Don't take me away when you're dealing with them in discipline and judgment. Don't deal with me this way because I have stood apart from them." And maybe, just maybe, there's a great word of encouragement for us in the day and age in which we live. You know, we're flooded with all of the wickedness of the world that is going on round about us and I don't need to describe that to you. You know that to which I allude, but along with that, well-meaning

Christian voices like to say, "Well, the judgment of God is coming and get ready for persecution," and all of that. Who knows what the future holds. We don't know. You know, maybe God will bring a sweeping revival upon our nation by a unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit and thousands if not hundreds of thousands would be converted to Christ and God would supernaturally turn the tide of evil by the power of the Gospel. That would be awesome if he did that. But if he doesn't and these things progress and God's judgment comes upon them, I think that we should look at a passage like this and take some comfort to realize that God is not going to forget his own as he judges sinners. He's not going to sweep us up in the kind of judgment and consequences that come to bear upon wicked sinners who reject him and treat us like he treats them. That's the whole point of David's prayer. "Lord, don't take me away with them."

God has the perfect ability and he manifested this in his dealings with the people of the Old Testament to somehow bring a protective shield upon his people even when he's dealing with a world of wickedness and pouring out his wrath upon it. We should have confidence in the loyal love of God and the fact that he won't forget his people. That somehow in the midst of a collapsing wickedness all around us that somehow those of us that are faithful are going to find that God takes care of us all the way through and that we manifest the fact that he knows the way of the righteous, Psalm 1:6.

So what am I saying? I'm saying, "Be careful who you listen to." As soon as people talk about the future tense, in the future tense, "This is going to happen and this will come to pass," understand that right away you're talking about a realm that you don't know about. We don't know what the future holds. If God brought revival on an entire nation then that would change the trajectory of everything, wouldn't it? So rather than for you who are under the sound of God's word here this evening and we're seeing what David prays here in Psalm 26 and what's still to come in the time that's left, rather than just getting swept up in fear and trembling at dire warnings coming from perhaps well-intentioned people. Let's not take our cues from that, from those human predictions that are just driven by their own fear and angst at what they see happening and come back to God's word, come back to God's character, remember that he's a God of loyal love who knows his own, who knows the integrity with which we try to walk and trust him to take care of us through it without fear.

Don't you think that our God is worthy of that kind of trust? Doesn't he deserve that kind of trust from you? After our Lord has suffered and died on the cross to take away our sins and after he's brought us safe thus far through all manner of challenges and dangers, some even today? If God has been faithful and has brought us to a point where we can serve together in a place of security like we have here this evening, on what basis do we suddenly fear what's going to come to us as if he's going to abandon us and leave us to share in the fate of the wicked in the unfolding of life? He deserves more trust than that from you, doesn't he?

You see, this all ultimately starts to come down to, I mean, David here...look at verse 2 again, "Test my mind and my heart." This comes down to what is animating and controlling your outlook and perspective on life? And what do you think about God? And

what do you believe Scriptures teach about it? Well, if he's faithful to his own, then that should drive out a lot of anxiety and angst about the future and we just need to be really careful about who we listen to and who we take our cues from. I don't care whose radio program we're talking about. That which would undermine our confidence in the complete faithfulness of God should be rejected no matter whose mouth it comes out of. This matters. This matters to the people of God. Frankly, I get tired of the dire projections about what's going to happen and, you know, like I need to fear atheists more than I need to fear God. No. The atheists are the ones who ought to be afraid. They need to be afraid of my God. I don't need to be afraid of them. They're not in control.

You see, in the way that you think and the way that you respond to these things, here's why this matters, beloved. This is why I get a little bit passionate about this is because it's a reflection on the glory of God the way his people respond to life about them and we owe him enough and a deep enough allegiance that says, "Lord, I am not going to tremble in the face of these things. I'm going to take the simple posture that David expresses here and just ask you, 'Lord, don't take away my soul with the sinners. Don't treat me like the men of bloodshed will be treated. Lord, they are wicked. Their hand is full of bribery and lies but, Lord, that's not me so why would you deal with me that way?'"

Then he raises a final petition for God's favor to be upon him and, again, lest we think that David here is boasting in self-righteousness, verse 11 will correct it. He says in verse 11, "But as for me," you see the distinction? "Lord, I understand. I understand that you're going to deal with sinners and it's going to be very harsh for them. It's going to be difficult for them. But as for me," by contrast, "Lord, there is a different realm that applies.

11 As for me, I shall walk in my integrity.

They can do what they're going to do and whatever our leaders or whatever they do, whatever they do, Lord, as for me, what I'm going to do is I'm going to walk in my integrity. My pattern of life is going to manifest a responsiveness to your word, to your truth and a trust in your loyal love and your lovingkindness. That's what I'm going to do."

And look at his prayer. His prayer continues here, the prayer from integrity continues and notice the trust and the request for grace that he makes here in verse 11. It's so short and so simple.

Redeem me, and be gracious to me.

He's asking for grace. He's not demanding favorable treatment based on his own personal merit. He is appealing to the lovingkindness of God to be gracious with him, to be merciful to him, to go beyond his deserving and to give out of the goodness and the grace of God rather than to the fullness of what he deserves.

"Redeem me, and be gracious to me." Is that the prayer of a boastful, self-righteous, cocky man? No. No, and when we assert our expectation of God's future on us even in

this life, it's not from a statement that we deserve it, that God owes us. No, that has nothing to do with it, beloved. That's the furthest thing from our mind. We set all of that aside when we came to Christ for salvation. We acknowledged our guilt and our unworthiness and we entrusted ourselves to him who promised to deal with us graciously if we came to him. This is just a continuation of where we started. So, "Lord, as much as it depends on us, the commitment of our heart is that we're going to walk in a life of whole-hearted devotion to you and as we do that, we look dependently upon you to redeem us and to be gracious to us because our ultimate confidence is in you, not in ourselves."

So this is not a self-righteous spirit. He's not self-sufficient. He's dependent on his Lord. That's why he's asking. That's why he's praying. Beloved, notice that David does not claim this as a right that he can demand but asks it as a gift from the gracious hand of his Lord. And where does that leave him? What does that kind of inner life produce? It produces confidence, assurance. It produces trust.

Look at verse 12. He says,

12 My foot stands on a level place;

It's a metaphorical way of saying, "I'm stable. I'm confident. I'm secure. My feet are on the rock and I'm not going to waver back and forth."

David has appealed to God in integrity. He has trusted God to be faithful and now watch this and this is where you need to walk out tonight, beloved: having done that, he is renewed to move forward in life with his fears left behind and renewed in confidence in Christ. He's confident of God's favor and that's why he says, "I stand on a level place." Honestly, I want more Christian leaders, more Christian pastors, I want more Christian men with a national voice to talk from a perspective of, "We are secure. We stand in a stable place because of the favor of the Lord rather than working the people of God up in fear and drawing their attention away from the loyal love of our God." I want that. I ask that. I call for that because this Psalm teaches us that when our trust is where it should be and where our integrity is where it should be, we are secure because we are under the protective hand of our Good Shepherd, Psalm 23.

He has asked God to test his faith and look at what he says. He pledges here at the close to publicly honor God with the expected answer. He says, "In the congregations," plural, amongst many people of God, "I will bless the LORD." I'm confident. I'm secure and as this situation moves forward and as God honors my prayer and answers my prayers and vindicates me before sinful men, I'm telling you now that when that happens then, I am going to give verbal testimony to the glory and the goodness and the grace of God and men will hear me say it with my lips. He's confident of the outcome because he knows his God will not permit his feet to stumble.

Now, beloved, why wouldn't we just live like that? Why wouldn't we just embrace that? Why wouldn't we just say, "This is great! This belongs to us as the people of God! We

can live this way! We can live in confidence and with a sense of stability going forward even despite what's crashing down around us." Why would we not embrace that and say, "This is a blessing from God! This is the fruit of the life that he gives to his people that we don't have to be afraid." Why wouldn't we want that and just say, "If this is it, then I receive it!" In New Testament terms, David here has shown us three marks of salvation.

Beloved, let me ask you: do you trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and that he will keep to you the promise that he has made of eternal life? Is your heart resting on Christ and on his promises exclusively, denying any merit in yourself? Well, if that's true, then certain things will mark your life. You can recognize this. You don't just say, "Well, I signed the card. I walked the aisle. I raised my hand and that proves it." No, that doesn't prove anything. That proves that the tendons of your muscles moved at a particular point in time but it says nothing about the faith commitment of your heart. Ask yourselves these questions to test your spiritual health and in this room, I say these things expecting you to feel affirmed and encouraged in your walk. Do you love the people of God? That's the mark of a true believer, someone to whom God has set his favor and who can expect God's blessing to come. Do you love the people of God? Secondly, do you earnestly seek his truth? I believe that to be true about you. That's why you're here. I believe that about you but you need to answer that for yourself. Thirdly, do you walk in obedience? Do you find sin distasteful? Something to be abhorred and that you would rid yourself of it completely if only you could but at least the tenor and direction of your heart is toward obedience? David said, "I love the habitation of your people. I love the habitation of your house. Test my inner man. I rely on your truth. I'm walking in integrity." David is just giving us a prefigure of things that the Apostle John spoke often about in 1 John. The same principles, different language.

Beloved, here's a great place for us to end. If those things are true of you, then based on God's word I can promise you this: you can be confident that the Lord of heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ, will deal favorably with you now and he will separate you from sinners in that time to come when he judges them in wrath. We serve a gracious faithful Lord and no one who believes in him, no one who walks in integrity before him does so in vain.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Lord, thank you for this Psalm and for the opportunity we've had tonight to share in it together. I trust that many, many people in this room and within the sound of my voice are encouraged by a fresh encounter with your attributes. You are good to your people and it would never be any other way and whether we face danger in death and escape by the skin of our teeth, whether we're struggling financially or physically or with difficult relationships, Father, here under the clarity of your word we affirm our confidence in you and that in you we have stability and we have reasons to be firm, to be unafraid and to move forward in faithfulness. And Lord, we pledge to you corporately and individually, we pledge to you that as you manifest your blessings to us in days to come, when we see the fruit of your favor upon us while others suffer the consequences of sin, we pledge to you, O God, that you will find us blessing your name and giving testimony

to your glory. We ask you for the opportunity to do that. We know that you'll provide the faithful supply for our lives. We're confident of that. We just ask you, Father, in the days to come individually and corporately, that you would give us the opportunity to respond, to declare before men the faithfulness and the glory of our God, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Bless us in that direction and provide the opportunity for us to fulfill our part. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.