

Psalm 26

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 03 May 2011 09:23

Time and again I counsel Christians to live righteously and not to consort regularly with the unsaved. They listen and 'agree', but then go on to do what they wish. It is an habitual routine, for Christians to sit and listen to a pastor's or teacher's counsel, to agree solemnly, and then to live life like the unsaved for the next six days.

What does this achieve? Sometimes the one who counsels already knows of this unrighteous way of life. Even if he is deceived by assurances, he has given God's word on the matter, and those who ignore it do so at their peril.

When I was an unsaved young man, pubs were places of poor repute, drinking dens filled with smoke and drunks. There were no clubs, just church halls with pounding music played by wannabe 'Beatles'... the bass drum thumped so loudly it reverberated through the hall, so we did not stay long! And girls and boys were on opposite sides of the hall, drinking orange squash. It was too expensive to go to the cinema.

So, my future wife and I (by then, saved) walked a lot. On our day off we usually walked five miles to a small seaside village outside town, had a bag of chips (between us), sat on a bench, and walked back again! Today? Pubs and clubs are the places even Christians go to, to their shame! They cannot survive without them, or their multi-tasking, but useless, mobile 'phones! And so they have lost the innocent pleasures of simply chatting and walking.

The present 'pleasures' are a delusion, something that causes many to 'slide' away from God. They have no idea what it is like to live righteously; and they do not *wish* to live that way anyway, because it restricts their time spent on sinful pleasures. Read how David lived – and then follow his example. It is the only way to avoid sinning regularly.

Verse 1

1.

Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

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David makes a very bold statement. He asks the Lord to test him, to see that he is genuine: "Judge me, O LORD". To 'judge' shaphat, can mean to punish or to rule. In this context it means to vindicate and judge to be acceptable as righteous. Can many men today be so bold before God? Can they be so confident in their righteousness as to ask God to examine them closely for sin?

David had that confidence. Do not mistake this for human confidence – David's confidence was not in himself but in the Lord. He was confident because "I have walked in mine integrity". His walk/life, or halak, was holy, for all to see. His life was based on his integrity: innocence, simplicity and uprightness.

Some would point a finger at him and say that he fell badly with Bathsheba, so how could he be called holy? This shows a poor understanding of grace and sin. When David sinned he repented. Many today who sin, do not repent. When we repent God 'forgets' what we have done; that is, He does not punish us for it. And, when we repent, we can start again, so we begin anew with righteousness. We strayed from the true path, but then came back again to God's way.

So, even if this had been written after his sin with Bathsheba, after his repentance, he turned back to the Lord and so he "walked (in mine) integrity". Do not let your sin drag you down! God does not want you to mull it over after you repent – Satan is the one who wants you to be grieved all the time over your past sins.

David trusted in the LORD; he had faith in Him. Because he trusted in God, David said he "shall not slide". This is not quite the same as our modern idea of 'backsliding', where one's life generally slips backwards into sin as a way of life. Rather, to 'slide' in this context, ma'ad simply means to slip temporarily, to be shaken, taking one's eye off God for a short time.

Many Christians seem to be fine so long as everything goes well. But, when something hard happens, they do not just falter, they fall and begin to sin. They cannot see what has happened as a test or as something God will help with. So, they feel let down and sin some more! Christians who do this prove their 'faith' is nothing of the sort, but is only a superficial acceptance of words in scripture.

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Every one of us can 'slide' temporarily, but, if we hand over our lives completely to God, we will not 'slide' at all. It comes down to how real our beliefs and faith are. Got faith? Then nothing will rock your life to distraction!

Verses 2&3

1.

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

2.

For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

David continues with his request of God to examine his life. To *bachan* is to closely scrutinise and check for purity. To

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is more or less the same thing – to test, as one would test the quality of gold. "Prove me" said David. All Christians are saved and have the Holy Spirit within, but the quality of that new life can differ dramatically, depending on how the Christian lives... truly on God's path, or straying off it. So, though every Christian is 'gold', that gold might be heavily contaminated by dross, hence the need for

nacah

or proving.

We are all destined for Heaven if we are saved, but oh how good it is to live this *present* life as God demands! What a difference it makes to witness and even our own hearts and minds. Do you dare ask God to test your life, to see if it proves 100% gold? Or, are you content to be saved and yet to carry around all that contamination that diminishes the value of the gold on this earth?

Dare you ask God to "try (your) reins and... heart"? "Reins" are the emotions. The "heart" is the seat of knowledge, thought, etc., and reflects your moral character. That is, the reins and heart describe who you are, your character or personality. David is saying, then, that everything about him is real and spiritually sound.

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Many Christians think this is a struggle, a titanic fight between the 'old man' and the new creation in Christ. Not so! Perhaps those who think that way love to feel miserable or threatened all the time! Or, they have a hidden agenda, and such a threat gives them a reason to cast out non-existent demons, or to pray mighty prayers for deliverance...when there is nothing to be delivered from, except one's own false perceptions!

God does not say we will be 100% sinless in this life. That is why He allows us repentance. When we repent we are again pure in His eyes. Then, we sin again... and repent again... that is how it is. God knows it. When we are always alert to our own failures and sin, and repent whenever necessary, we, too, can say with David that our reins and heart are sound. It is also how God sees us, regardless of our sins. This is because He sees His Son standing in our stead, and Jesus Christ *is* 100% perfect. He is our mediator.

Do not despair! And do not follow the errant crowd who think we should always bow our heads in shame because we are still sinners! No, Christ took away that awful burden of guilt. It is our task simply to repent and turn back to Him. We are not called to always lay flat in the dirt to emphasise our still sinful state. Live life! Live it with joy!

Yes, let us live this life with expectation of wondrous things to come in Heaven – but not to the exclusion of the life we already have on this earth. God does not keep us here just to be miserable and down in spirit because of our 'old man'. He expects us to live fully, enjoying what He gives us, even if it is only the sun and air to breathe.

I have come across ministries and individuals who continually deride their life in this world. Where does this come from? If God keeps us here, there is a reason for it – and it is not to be dour and looking only to the future. We are **HERE**, and here **NOW**. We must live as God intends. If the unsaved see us dour and never happy in this world, they will rightly assume our lives are miserable, made so by our supposed 'faith'. Thank God for everything you have, especially the salvation that will one day transport you to Heaven. But, do not waste your time on this earth, especially not with a refusal to live life fully.

Why should we do so? "For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in truth." God is forever good, though to watch many Christians, you would think He has given them no good whatever! We tend to see only what we want to see – and many only want to see misery and woe. They are not happy unless they are unhappy! If we live our lives in God's truth (via His word), we see everything in His way, and all is well.

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That is what David is saying. How does YOUR life compare to that? Do you truly live your life steeped in His word, so that your every thought, emotion and way, is reflective of God and His glory? From observation I know most do not, and, at times, myself included. It is a shame – change now and live life in God's glory.

Verses 4-7

1.

I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

2.

I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

3.

I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

4.

That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

David says "I have not sat with vain persons". To 'sit' in scripture means to have an attitude of rest, such a state being usual. Do we sit with holy people, or with unholy? Who we sit with, or sit comfortably with, will show itself by the way we live. Everything about us is a clue as to who we associate with. Vain persons are those who are false, 'empty vessels', liars, who act unworthily. Their lives are a mirror of their nothingness. They act as they do because they are the 'walking dead'... which is how God sees the unsaved.

Look at the description again – is this not how most people are today? Do they not live worthless and useless lives? Do they not fill their time with things that reinforce just how empty their lives are? Younger people in particular fill the void with pubs, clubs, and associating with vain unsaved people whose end is hell. A huge number of them take drugs and alcohol, as an adjunct to sexual perversity or promiscuity. It is like living (or drowning) in a cess pit and

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pretending to enjoy it.

No Christian can live like that... and yet many do! Not just fleetingly, but they 'sit down' with the unsaved and do what they do, talk as they do, etc., thus proving that their lives are based not on God, but on vanity and worthlessness. Repent now, and change.

David, then, did not associate with anyone whose lives were worthless, nor did he "go in with dissemblers". That is, people who do things in secret. Mostly, things done in secret are kept away from everyone's eyes because they are not good or sound or pure. That includes fraud, deception, lies, evil behaviour, and so on. David was different; his life was an 'open book' and nothing was secret. Is your life like that?

Can anyone open your life at any page and always find truth, purity and holiness? If not, why not? It is what God expects of us. And, frankly, if you do not live a transparent life, it will be used against you by the world. It is alright for the unsaved to live wickedly – but pity help Christians who are found out in even one sin! So, do not be a dissembler: be holy. Do not have many faces.

Also, David "hated the congregation of evil doers". For that reason he "will not sit with the wicked". He refused, then, to associate with evil doers and the wicked. He would not 'sit' or be at rest with them. In my various work situations I did not eat or sit with those whose words were unsavoury or sinful.

As a student nurse I always ate lunch in training school by myself, whilst others smoked, swore and held wrong discussions. It was noted by the principal of the school, who called me in for a chat. He thought I had a problem with socialising (which would have counted against me as a student nurse). I advised that I felt physically sick when people smoked near me, and that I did not wish to hear sinful speech. He apparently understood.

The phrase "congregation of evil-doers" is really one term in Hebrew. Evil-doers are harmful to themselves and to others; they cause injury, and are morally evil, always ready to do wrong to others, especially Christians. Their lives are 'broken', with no hope of repair. (Salvation recreates – it does not just mend). The "wicked", *rasha*, are guilty, hostile towards God and those who love Him. In God's eyes they are criminals. And this is also how we should see them.

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The root-verb of the word also means the wicked are condemned. There is an obvious allusion here to the modern wickedness of homosexuals and Muslims (these mentioned because they are currently the very real enemies of God and Christians).

The wicked make a big noise to get their own way. They stir-up dissention until they obtain all their demands. That is part of being *rasha*'. They are unrighteous and they hate righteous living and those who live holy lives. Every cause they hold to is unrighteous, and this is why giving them 'rights' is itself a sin. They stand guilty and condemned before our Lord! David would have none of it – what about you?

Instead of giving wicked people credibility, David shunned them: "I will wash mine hands in innocency". Though used by Pilate when he handed Jesus over to another, it was symbolic of being free of guilt. David was innocent, guilty of nothing and so not warranting punishment. More than that he was *naqah* – *exempt* from guilt and punishment. Human beings like to punish themselves even when God forgives them. This is an inverted form of pride, for it believes that if we so see ourselves, we somehow work towards forgiveness. If you have committed the worst sins ever, but have repented, then you are free from guilt and punishment. You are *naqah*

. Life is too short for you to 'beat yourself up' over sins God has already forgiven.

David, you will notice, said he "will" wash his hands to be free of guilt. It was his normal way of life, then and in the future. Is it yours? He said he would "compass" the altar of God. This is a verb that means literally what it says – David would surround the altar, walk around it, *cabab*. That is, David would besiege God's altar until He forgave him. The idea includes that of sitting at a table, resting. Thus, David would not sit with the wicked, but

would

sit with the Lord.

This would enable David to "publish with the voice of thanksgiving", and "tell of thy wondrous works." This he did regularly, with his psalms, which were sung and played before the Temple attendees and priests. We should all be thankful to God, for what He gives us, but, mainly, for Who He is. Not only is this state of thankfulness good for our souls, it also encourages others.

Verses 8-10

1.

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LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

2.

Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

3.

In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

Then comes a statement by David I could easily have related to in the past. "LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." David loved being in the Temple, and the inner sanctuary where God's glory was represented by, and in, the Ark.

Today, Christians say they love to be in their churches, but I often wonder. I loved being in my earlier churches. My mother was a church caretaker, and so I often went in when the building was empty. The atmosphere was perfect! And I loved going to services, and being with God's people.

Sadly, all that changed slowly, until I and my family eventually had to leave the established churches. The godly 'feeling' seemed to vanish over time. Forty years later we eventually returned to the same church my mother was once caretaker of – and it was cold and uninviting. What had changed?

The post-war friendliness is no longer in most churches; churches have become business-like more than Christ-like; members read alien Bible versions instead of the trusted 1611 AV; no-one really cares about their fellow Christians any more. A short while ago I visited a church I had once been a member of. Though I went up to those I knew and held out my hand in friendship, with a smile, none took it up, and none smiled! They avoided me as if I had done something wrong! It was an example of what I have just related to you.

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This coincides with the increasingly radical paganism in society at large and the imposition of wickedness on the country by a small handful of evil men and women, including our government. And it has had a terrible effect on Christians in their churches. Our own small church has been on its own for the past 25 years, so we have not suffered the general trend. For this we thank God!

Do you love to be in the house of God, with God's people? I do not mean just attending and ignoring the widening cracks. I mean as God describes true fellowship: love coupled to true doctrine. It is a sad fact that many churches hobble along rather than soar into the heavens, as they gloss-over heresies and personalised 'Christianity' practised by so many today, where ridiculous 'interpretations' are preferred to genuine truth. We need to get back to where God's glory is present! And that is only possible where God's people worship in humility and truth.

Thus, we cannot and must not be amongst evil people: "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." That is, 'Do not find me consorting with sinners or in the places where they go.' And 'Don't let me join with people guilty of shedding blood without cause'. How do you fare? Do you routinely associate with sinners and those who think nothing of being violent in word or deed?

Remember that a sin is an offence to God, as is the sinner. So, when a person who is saved associates with a sinner, he or she is sinning, too! Do not tell me you will be lonely if you do not join with sinners. Do not tell me you need friends, so you go where sinners go. It does not count as an excuse with God.

As I keep telling others... the sinner always affects the saved person – it does not work the other way round. This is because the life of the sinner relates to the 'old man' in us, and so we sin; whereas the Holy Spirit, also within us, does not 'rub off' on the unsaved person to make him or her holy or nicer.

Satan will use any such association at will, and you will start to lose your spiritual edge very quickly. I see it happening in those around me! I always know when they are associating with sinners – their character changes bit at a time and they no longer seem happy as believers. Something else I tell Christians is that it is better to be absolutely lonely in human terms, than to fall before Almighty God for the sake of dubious friendships with the unsaved.

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I must admit that my path was chosen for me: any unsaved people and superficial Christians I used to know, all went their way over time until I knew no-one. This taught me a valuable lesson in how to live, as God filled the human void with His presence. Now, those I know tend to be genuine believers, and this is something else I thank God for. Live for Him and He will make sure your life is filled with Himself.

The hands of men of blood are always up to mischief, “and their right hand full of bribes”. Today, we think of ‘mischief’ in terms of little boys being naughty. But, it means more than that in scripture, where the mischievous person is wicked, devious, always planning to do what is wrong. Everything they do is designed to be wicked.

It also includes those who are sexually promiscuous, perverse, adulterers, idolaters, prostitutes, incestuous and without ethics or morals. They are lewd, caring nothing for goodness and morality. The root, zamam, means to plot evil. We see this in abundance today, especially with homosexuality, and also in governments. And what they do ‘rubs off’ on Christians who cannot be bothered to live righteously or in truth.

The right hand (symbolic for power), is “full of bribes”. They cannot get their way by truth or genuine activity, so they have to appeal to base desires of greed to get their own way. Today, those who want laws to suit themselves bribe those in power, not so much with money, but with promises of support, votes, or fake presents and awards, etc. They therefore get their way by appealing to vanity and by censoring criticism, making those who are vain comply, because they think it is the fashionable thing to do. In this way they ruin societies and increase evil.

Verses 11&12

1.

But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

2.

My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

David, though, wants none of it. “But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity”. Integrity -

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innocence and righteousness - are finer than the best gold! I would rather be poor and destitute than lose integrity. With David, I would then call upon the Lord, "redeem me, and be merciful unto me." 'Keep me safe, save me from my enemies and situations; show me mercy though I do not deserve it.'

"My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD." David says he is on firm ground, not on sand. The 'even place' is a place of solid uprightness. That is, his assurance comes because he is righteous. Do not be afraid to say you are living righteously (if you really are).

Many today think it is arrogant or proud to claim to be righteous, when it ought to be the proper claim made by all Christians at all times! We are commanded to be righteous, so how can modern Christians pretend not to be righteous? Or, rather, how can they even say it? They can say it because they are NOT righteous, but living a lie, pretending to be something they are not. If you are truly living righteously, then say so. Make sure others live the same way, not to be just like you, but to be just like Christ. It is the only way to avoid falling.

Then, when you know God is with you, "bless the LORD" in the congregations, amongst fellow believers. Bless God daily, because He alone is worthy. Follow David's example and obey God wholly and always. Nothing else matters. Some refuse to live this way, because they fear losing this or that. It is not how to live as a believer; you must follow and obey, whatever the cost. It is only when we do that, crossing over from self to God, that everything begins to make sense, and He comes to us with gifts and benefits that more than make up for anything meagre we have lost (or *think* we have lost).

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