

PSALMS

Chapter 26

¹ Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. ² Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; ³ for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth. ⁴ I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; ⁵ I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. ⁶ I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD, ⁷ proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. ⁸ I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells. ⁹ Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with bloodthirsty men, ¹⁰ in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes. ¹¹ But I lead a blameless life; redeem me and be merciful to me. ¹² My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the LORD.

Ps 26 A prayer for God's discerning mercies—to spare his faithful and godly servant from the death that overtakes the wicked and ungodly. The prayer for vindication (see v. 1) suggests that the king is threatened by the “deceitful” (v. 4) and “bloodthirsty” (v. 9) men to whom he refers (as in Ps 23; 25; 27–28). This psalm is linked with Ps 27–28 (see also Ps 23–24) by the theme of the Lord's house: Here David's “love” (v. 8) for the temple (or tabernacle) testifies to the authenticity of his piety; in Ps 27 the Lord's temple is David's sanctuary from his enemies; in Ps 28 David directs his cry for help to the Lord's throne room (“your Most Holy Place,” 28:2) in the temple. (CSB)

The plea of a man who has been falsely accused of wrongdoing. This psalm may have been sung by worshipers as they entered the temple gates. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, a prayer for vindication; vv 4–5, separated from the wicked; vv 6–7, at the Lord's altar; vv 8–10, a prayer for distinction from the wicked; vv 11–12, determination to bless the Lord. (TLSB)

26:1–8 An appeal for God to take account of David's moral integrity, his unwavering trust and his genuine delight in the Lord—not a boast of self-righteousness, such as that of the Pharisee (see Lk 18:9–14). (CSB)

26:1 *Vindicate*. Facing false accusations, David calls for God's perfect examination that will exonerate him. (TLSB)

blameless life. See v. 11 and note; a claim of moral integrity (see vv. 2–5), not sinless perfection (see 7:8; 41:12; 101:2; and especially 1Ki 9:4). (CSB)

He has not been deceitful or hypocritical. (TLSB)

trusted. Obedience and trust are the two sides of godliness, as the Abraham story exemplifies (see Ge 12:4 and note; 22:12; see also Ps 34:8–14 and note – To trust and obey—that is “the fear of the LORD.”). (CSB)

26:2 God’s perfect knowledge is not limited to external behavior. He knows our hearts, thoughts, and intentions. Only He truly knows us. (TLSB)

heart ... mind. See note on 7:9 (Lit. “hearts and kidneys.” The Israelites used the words as virtual synonyms (but “heart” most often) to refer to man’s innermost center of conscious life. To “search mind and heart” was a conventional expression for God’s examination of man’s hidden character and motives.). (CSB)

26:3 *your love ... your truth.* That is, your love-and-truth (see 40:10). David keeps his eye steadfastly on the Lord’s love (see note on 6:4 – he Hebrew for this phrase denotes befriending. Appeal to God’s “(unfailing) love, kindness, mercy” is frequent in the OT since it summarizes all that the Lord covenanted to show to Israel (see Dt 7:9, 12) as well as to David and his dynasty.) and truth (faithfulness; see 25:10), which are pledged to those “who keep the demands of his covenant” (25:10). (CSB)

walk continually. In order to receive the covenant benefits. (CSB)

26:4–5 *sit with.* David refuses to settle in or associate himself with that company he describes as “deceitful men,” “hypocrites,” “evildoers,” “the wicked” (see 1:1 and note; see also Ps 101). (CSB)

David does not boast that he is without sin. He does, however, separate himself from the wicked men in this life. Therefore he is confident that God will separate him from the wicked when they receive judgment in death. (PBC)

26:4 *hypocrites.* Context may suggest those who deal fraudulently—or people like those described in Pr 6:12–14. (CSB)

26:5 *assembly of evildoers.* Contrasting David’s desire to worship in the “great assembly” (v 12), he rejects the “assembly of evildoers,” those who reject God. (TLSB)

26:6 *wash my hands in innocence.* Reference appears to be to a ritual claiming innocence. “Clean hands and a pure heart” are requisite for those who come to God (see 24:4 and note – Right attitudes and motives. Jesus said that the “pure in heart ... will see God” (Mt 5:8).). (CSB)

Washing hands could indicate innocence (Mt 27:24) or ceremonial cleanness (Ex 30:17–21). Either way, David again asserts the falsehood of the charges against him. (TLSB)

go about your altar. To vocally celebrate God's saving acts beside his altar was a public act of devotion in which one also invited all the assembled worshipers to praise (see 43:4). (CSB)

Your altar. A person could approach God's altar only through the forgiveness of sins. (TLSB)

26:7 *your praise.* See note on 9:1 (The Hebrew for this phrase is translated "declare." The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God's holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings.). (CSB)

telling. Worship included remembrance and celebration of God's saving acts. David not only goes to the tabernacle, but he also proclaims the Lord's work. (TLSB)

26:8 *habitation.* David loves being in God's house, where he finds sanctuary, protection, and God's loving presence. (TLSB)

where your glory dwells. The presence of God's glory signaled the presence of God himself (see Ex 24:16; 33:22). His glory dwelling in the tabernacle (see Ex 40:35), and later the temple (see 1Ki 8:11), assured Israel of the Lord's holy, yet gracious, presence among them. Jn 1:14 announces that same presence in the Word become flesh who "made his dwelling among us." (CSB)

He doesn't love the tabernacle for its beauty, but because God promised to be there. John says that Christ is God's tabernacle, and we see God's glory in Him (Jn 1:14). (TLSB)

It means actual fellowship with God. (Leupold)

26:9–11 An appeal that God will not bring on David the end (death) that awaits the wicked. (CSB)

26:9 *soul.* See note on 6:3 (Here, as often, a synonym for "deliver.>"). (CSB)

Only when a man has thoroughly and consistently shunned the ways of evil and completely detests them can he speak as this man does. (Leupold)

26:11 *lead a blameless life.* A return to the appeal with which David began (see v. 1). (CSB)

He throws himself completely upon the mercy of God, for he has no other refuge. (Leupold)

redeem. See note on 25:22 (Here, as often, a synonym for "deliver.>"). (CSB)

26:12 A concluding confession of confidence (see note on 3:8 – A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be heard) and a vow to praise (see note on 7:17 – A vow to praise. Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer. They reflect Israel’s religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need—if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God’s saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple.). (CSB)

level ground. Where the going is smooth and free from the danger of falling (see 143:10; Isa 40:4; 42:16). (CSB)

He become certain of his being heard and delivered and sees all the rough places of the path on which he has been walking smoothed out. (Leupold)

assembly. See note on 1:5 (The worshiping assembly at God’s sanctuary.). (CSB)

Augustine: “I will not hide Your blessing, O Lord, from those whom You have called; for next to the love of You I join the love of my neighbor” (*NPNF* 1 8:64). (TLSB)

praise. See note on 9:1 (The Hebrew for this phrase is translated “declare.” The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God’s holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings.). (CSB)

Ps 26 In faith, David worships, proclaiming God’s wondrous deeds. He loves worship and being in God’s presence (v 8). In worship, we sometimes focus on ourselves instead of on God. God calls us to repentance so that He may bless us and forgive us. Strengthened in faith, we respond by telling others of the great things He has done. • Blessed Trinity, forgive us, and empower us to worship You in faith and joy. Amen. (TLSB)