

Praying for Vindication

Introduction *vindicate: to show or to prove to be right, reasonable, or justified*

From Jun 30, 2018: CRISIS IN NIGERIA AS THOUSANDS KILLED IN 'PURE GENOCIDE'

THOUSANDS of men, women and children have been killed in Nigeria in what the country's Christian community are condemning as "ethnic cleansing".

By JOEY MILLAR, UK Daily Express - PUBLISHED: 09:00, Sat, Jun 30, 2018 | UPDATED: 09:29, Sat, Jun 30, 2018

Last weekend 238 Christians were killed in a number of attacks by militia in Plateau State, a region in the heart of the country.

Campaigners are warning it is just the latest example of "pure genocide" in a country ravaged by religious division.

A joint statement issued by the Christian Association of Nigeria said more than 6,000 Christian worshippers - "mostly children, women and the aged" - had already been killed this year.

They said: "There is no doubt that the sole purpose of these attacks is aimed at ethnic cleansing, land grabbing and forceful ejection of the Christian natives from their ancestral land and heritage.

From July 13, 2018: NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS UNITE TO PRAY FOR 'CARNAGE' OF BELIEVERS TO END

By Stoyan Zaimov , Christian Post Reporter | Jul 13, 2018 7:35 AM

The Christian Association of Nigeria held a national prayer session on Wednesday against the "barbaric killing" of Christians at the hands of radical Muslim herdsmen, as the country reels from another deadly rampage this week where 39 people were killed in the north.

"The church wants the carnage to stop," CAN President Rev. Supo Ayokunle said.

CAN is considering a nationwide protest against the killing of believers, according to ThisDayLive.

Ayokunle said that the ongoing killings, where some estimate as many as 6,000 believers have been slaughtered since the start of the year, are turning Nigeria into a "deserted land."

These help us connect Psalm 26 to our world!

Psalm 26 ESV

Of David.

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

Those who walk with integrity as faithful followers of God can confidently pray that God would vindicate them. Because of Christ, we can confidently pray, “Vindicate me!”

Vindicate King David

Context:

- There is clearly opposition, though these people are largely unidentified
- There is an underlying sense of accusation against the psalmist
- Psalms 25-28 share these themes but what is notable about Psalm 26 is the psalmist’s appeal to vindication based on his own loyalty to God
- There is a petition for protection in light of the pressures that enemies were inflicting on the psalmist

Plea for Vindication based on Loyalty – v1-3

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.

- Bock calls this psalm an “urgent appeal for vindication of the righteous, whom malicious enemies were bent on destroying”
- “Vindicate me” is a common plea in the psalms where the psalmist looks to God to set things right in regards to the psalmist’s situation
- The psalmist introduces the grounds for—in his eyes—his sure vindication: his own actions and his own attitudes
- “I have walked in integrity” = the way I have lived my life is balanced and blameless in thought and deed
- The foundation of his integrity is his “unwavering trust in God”
- Waver = slip, slide, totter – none of these words describe his trust
- The intensity of his request for vindication is dramatically increased when the psalmist appeals God to prove him, test him, and try him – Trust test

- David asks God to confirm his loyalty through the testing of his motive (my heart and mind) and his action (I walk in your faithfulness)

Very similar to the well known Psalm 139

- **Psalm 139:23-24 ESV**

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting

Evidence of Loyalty: Actions and ^{Attitudes} Motives – v4-8

LOYAL IN HIS RELATIONSHIPS – v4-5

*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.*

Actions

- Sitting with someone is to participate in their activities – the psalmist does not associate with a life characterized by sinfulness
- He also avoids the hypocrites, or more literally, men who conceal themselves...who conceal their evil nature

Attitude

- He hates...he rejects and abhors...those who reject and abhor his LORD

He will not join them in their godless lives

LOYAL IN HIS RELIGIOUS DUTIES – v6-8

*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.*

Actions

- He participates in the worship of God ^{according to} ~~through the direction~~ of the covenant
- Clean hands perhaps from ceremonial washing of the priests
- Going around the altar, perhaps in festal procession singing praises to God, declaring his awesome deeds, proclaiming thankfulness

Attitude

- He loves the presence of the LORD
- He loves God's true house where he can seek refuge from the opposition
- He loves to be where he can behold the majesty and power and beauty of God

A Plea for God's Gracious Vindication – v9-12

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.*

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.*

Do not sweep away my soul with sinners – The psalmist vindication will come when he is spared from God's judgment, when he is saved from sharing the same fate as those opposed to him

His loyalty will be proven when he is spared from the fate of those with impure attitudes—bloodthirsty—and impure actions—hands with evil devices and schemes (full of bribes)

The psalmist looks for redemption and mercy – redeem me...be gracious to me

Summary – v12

- A restatement of the psalmist's loyalty and integrity
- A "level place" is a position of firm faith that is consistent with God's truth
- To bless another human is to take note of their needs and meet them

- He will “bless the Lord” = To bless God is to take note of his glories and excellencies and respond to them in wonder and adoration

• The character of God: *redeem → love*
gracious → mercy and favour

Vindicate Nigerian believers

Do we understand this kind of opposition? Grants for summer works programs vs. genocide? ⇒ *Perhaps a prayer for children in the womb??*

A PRAYER FOR NIGERIAN BELIEVERS FROM PSALM 26

*Vindicate your people in Nigeria, O Lord,
as they walk in integrity,
and they steadfastly trust in you.*

*Prove them, O Lord, and try them;
test their hearts and my minds.*

*Keep your steadfast love ~~is~~ before their eyes,
and help them walk in your faithfulness.*

*They do not share the life of dishonest and deceitful people,
nor do they fraternize with wolves in sheep's clothing.*

*They find evil repulsive,
and by your grace they will not compromise.*

*They are innocent having found forgiveness in you through Christ's work
and they have not forsaken gathering in your Name, O Lord,
even proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.*

*O Lord, they love your presence
and the place where your glory dwells.*

*Do not sweep their souls away with sinners,
nor their lives with bloodthirsty men,
in whose hands are evil devices,
and whose right hands are full of bribes.*

*But as for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, let them walk in integrity;
redeem them, and be gracious to them.*

Plant their feet on level ground;

in the great assembly let them bless the Lord.

*I found this prayer easier to apply to life if I prayed it
and applied it to other people... it became difficult when I
tried to personalize it*

Vindicate Me

Paraphrase:

Vindicate me...show me to be right as opposed to those evil people who contend with me...make a judgment in my favour based on my loyalty and integrity.

Vindicate me by judging my enemies and yet dealing graciously and mercifully with me. And I will praise you.

Problem:

- I am uncomfortable with one aspect of the psalm. There is nothing wrong with the psalm; there is something wrong with me. I am uncomfortable make any request to God based on my actions and attitudes.
- This is because my greatest opposition, my greatest enemy, is my own sin. The very thing that I would pray to be vindicated from is the very thing which prevents me from making a prayer based on my attitudes and actions.
- In fact, my prayer would go in an opposite direction: "Vindicate me, O LORD, but not based on my integrity and not based on the steadfastness of my trust in You."

Three Applications:

- 1) Let every prayer you make in every situation you face have as its ground, as its basis, as its foundation, the actions and attitudes of Christ and not your own. → *this is present in the psalm; "be gracious to me"*

Philippians 3:4-10 ESV ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have

more:⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

Galatians 6:14 ESV ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Himself → Cross → You

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 ESV ²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The basis, the grounds, the argument for every prayer to God that I make is primarily Christ and my union with Him.

Do not give me what I justly deserve, give me what is mine in Christ! Substitution-GOSPEL

- My salvation does ^{not} depend on me... on my actions, on my attitudes, on the thoughts, intentions, motives and desires that I have.
- My salvation depends on Christ's actions and Christ's attitudes...

- 2) A prayer like Psalm 26 is a very specific prayer for a specific situation; if you are in a similar situation you can and should pray in this way.
- a. Facing opposition from evil people or persons
- not children misbehaving
 - b. The evil you are experiencing is in spite of your godliness
- not opposition based on your sin or foolishness
 - c. The evil you are facing is significant
- not being cut off in traffic
- 3) Desire to walk in a manner whereby you could pray in this way in any situation; desire to be holy. *STOP → What was your inner reaction?*

} Visit by a congregant

Do you desire to be holy? Do you desire to be able to say, "I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering ... your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness."

If not, consider 2 reasons why you might not desire to be holy:

I. You think holiness is unnecessary.

- a. Perhaps you do not desire to be holy because you think it is unnecessary based on the fact that in Christ you were justified—declared righteous before God—when you put your faith in Him.
- b. This is true. All those who have put their faith in Christ have been justified.
- c. It is equally true, however, that "Holiness is the great end underlying everything God has done for us in Christ."
- d. **Ephesians 1:4 ESV** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
- e. If you are a follower of Christ, God has saved you for a purpose, for you to live a holy life.
- f. **Matthew 5:20 ESV** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

HOLINESS IS NECESSARY
- complicated
- first step in assessing: Do you desire to be holy?

II. You think holiness is undesirable.

- a. For many, the word holiness has become tarnished. It suggests something negative, restrictive, prudish, uncool, and undesirable.

- b. It is often thought that a holy person is someone who is arrogant, exacting, overly proper, legalistic, hypocritical, and unloving.
- c. These are all false ideas associated with what many theologians says is God's ultimate characteristic: holiness.
- d. **Jonathan Edwards:** "Holiness is a most beautiful, lovely thing. Men are apt to drink in strange notions of holiness from their childhood, as if it were a melancholy, morose, sour, and unpleasant thing; but there is nothing in it but what is sweet and ravishingly lovely. 'Tis the highest beauty and amiableness, vastly above all other beauties; 'tis a divine beauty." ⇒ HOLINESS IS BEAUTIFUL... IN GOD & IN US!
- e. And understand this: There are no happy disobedient Christians. If you are content in running from God's will for you, you have reason to doubt that Christ's life is in you. (to be holy)
- f. **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 ESV** Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

REVIEW: ① Let every prayer you make have as its foundation and basis the person and work of Christ. Put yourself on the mercy of God, that He would consider not you but Christ.

② Pray a Psalm 26-like prayer when you face evil opposition that is significant

③ Desire holiness. Desire to walk with integrity. Desire to be unwavering