

"I Shall Not Slide"

Psalm 26

Originally titled "How to Keep from Sliding"

The title for this psalm is a familiar one: "A Psalm of David." That's all we know about it. There is no real evidence in the content of the psalm to point us in any real direction as to its occasion so we will not speculate on it. It is as we have seen before given to us without comment to occasion so it can be applied across the ages to the children of God.

There are some familiar principles found in this psalm that we have seen before, as well as basic Bible principles that are found throughout the Scriptures, some of which we studied in our "Walk in" series on Sunday mornings not too long ago.

The point of the psalm is found in the first and last verses: "I shall not slide" (vs. 1) and "My foot standeth" (vs. 12).

- The word "shall," although rarely used in modern American English, is one of strong emotion and was used in the time of the King James translation to emphasize that stronger emotion than found in the verb "will," as used in several other places in this psalm.
- The word is used in a literal sense for someone slipping or sliding physically. In its use here, it is used in a strong figurative sense, meaning to be tempted to turn away or to waver in one's faith.

We saw a similar term used in our study of the book of Hebrews when we studied Hebrews 2:1. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." I made these comments on that phrase in Hebrews 2:1:

- To “let them slip” is as a boat that gets loose of its mooring and slips adrift downstream. This can be considered in one of two ways, both end in the same destruction.
- We can be the ones in the boat tied to the anchor of God’s Word and if we’re not careful, we can get loose of it and drift away.
- Or the Word of God is the boat tied to us, and we simply aren’t paying close enough attention to it and it drifts away from us.
- This drifting doesn’t happen quickly most of the time. “Figuratively to slip away, suggesting a gradual and almost unnoticed movement past a certain point” (Zodhiates). It happens because we ignore the warning signs and get so caught up in the world around us that we simply fade away from God and His Word, most often seen coming by a drifting away from church.

Nothing in the world is easier than drifting. No person drifts upstream, only downstream. It is so easy. All you do is sit back and relax and let the boat go. You are soon lulled into a lazy stupor, not caring where you go. You may not even be aware you are drifting until it is too late, and the boat is on the rocks. Satan is very wise. He seldom urges a Christian to leave the church or to give up his faith in the Lord. Instead, he causes us to relax, rest on the oars, and drift along in the Christian life.

All around us are Christians who have drifted into a state of coldness and indifference. They have stopped caring about others who need to hear the message of God's saving grace.

So, to the point - how do we keep from sliding?

I. WALK WITH THE LORD - vs. 1-3

A. Walk in integrity - vs. 1a - "I have walked in mine integrity"

The word is defined in Webster's 1828 dictionary as "the entire, unimpaired state of anything, particularly of the mind; moral soundness or purity; incorruptness; uprightness; honesty. Integrity comprehends the whole moral character but has a special reference to uprightness in mutual dealings, transfers of property, and agencies for others."

The root of the Hebrew word is one that means complete or perfect and is used of Job 1:1 where Job is described as "perfect and upright." That means, "he was a finished product, well rounded and balanced" (Interpreter's Bible, p. 909).

Job 1:1

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

B. Walk in faith - vs. 1b - "I have trusted also in the LORD"

C. Walk as one tried and proven pure - vs. 1-2

1. "Judge me" - put my heart and actions on trial and pronounce judgment based on these. Vindication is the understanding here.
2. "Examine me" - put me to the test.
3. "Prove me" - use the test to prove my faithfulness or lack thereof.

4. "Try" me - speaks of the refiner's fire that is used to purify the precious metals to remove the dross. David is asking the LORD to put him through the fire, if necessary, to prove his worth.
- a) "My reins" - his very affections, his innermost person.
- b) "My heart" - here seen as the mind and seems to be speaking of his thoughts and desires.

Psalm 17:3

³ Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

Psalm 139:23-24

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Job 31:4-6

⁴ Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?

⁵ If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit;

⁶ Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.

D. Walk in the certainty of God's faithfulness to His Word - vs. 3

II. HATE THE INFLUENCE OF SIN - VS. 4-5

A. Don't make friends of the world - "I have not sat with vain persons" and I "will not sit with the wicked."

1. He was asking the LORD to judge him based on his actions, and one of those actions was his separation from the world and the influence of evil in the past ("I have not"), and he was boldly saying that he would continue not to follow the world into the future ("I will not").
2. Sitting is a posture of choice, a posture of pleasure and ease, and a posture of staying.

Psalm 1:1

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

B. Don't go where they are - "Neither will I go in with dissemblers" and "I have hated the congregation of evil doers."

Notice again the past and present with the eye to the future uses of the verbs here - "I will" and "I have."

1. "Dissemblers" - סֵלִיפִי - literally, to hide or to conceal. In its use here, one who tries to hide who he really is. It denotes a hypocrite. These are dangerous people and need to be avoided once they are discovered.
2. "Congregation of evil doers" - in distinct contrast to the temple worship that David longed for. "Our crowd" should not be an assembly of the world or for worldly purposes.

C. In general, hate what they do.

III. LIVE PURE AND BE THANKFUL - VS. 6-7

A. Vs. 6 - pure in life and worship

1. "I will wash my hands in innocency" - as the high priest needed to wash his hands before he could offer sacrifice to demonstrate the need for purification and holiness, so David is saying here that he had "washed" himself in holiness.
2. "So will I compass thine altar, O LORD" - he had a desire to worship God in purity.

B. Vs. 7 - speaks of voicing the praise of thanksgiving for all that God had done for him.

IV. BE FAITHFUL TO THE LORD - VS. 8-10

A. We're to love the LORD's presence in our lives - vs. 8

This is speaking of the temple worship that David often longed for - that's where the presence of the LORD was and where fellowship with Him was the most helpful.

Today, we have Him with us always in the Person of the Holy Spirit, but we can make an application here for the fellowship and helpfulness that being in church provides.

B. Vs. 9-10 - our fellowship should be around others of like precious faith, those that hold to the same principles we do in service to the Lord, not with those that would fight against what is right and good.

This also speaks of church today - it's a place to take refuge from the world in a lot of ways.

V. TAKE A STAND FOR GOD AND THE RIGHT - VS. 11-12

A. vs. 11 - no matter who else does or doesn't, "as for me, I will walk in mine integrity."

B. If we're standing with God, we'll be on an "even place" - no matter what is on either side, the path we're on with God is an even place, and big enough to hold us straight.

Conclusion: If we're on an even place then we can't slide. It's when we get away from God that we begin to slide. Just as Peter began to sink when he took his eyes off the Lord, so will we begin to slide, and once started, there's only one way to go and that is down, until we look up.

Robert Robinson had been saved out of a tempestuous life of sin through George Whitefield's ministry in England. Shortly after that, at the age of twenty-three, Robinson wrote the hymn *Come, Thou Fount*.

Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Sadly, Robinson wandered far from those streams and, like the Prodigal Son, journeyed into the distant country of carnality. Until one day -- he was traveling by stagecoach and sitting beside a young woman engrossed in her book. She ran across a verse she thought was beautiful and asked him what he thought of it.

Prone to wander -- Lord, I feel it --
Prone to leave the God I love.

Bursting into tears, Robinson said, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."

-- Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories*, p. 52