

**THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRITY:  
Walk faithfully before an all-knowing God:  
An Exposition of Psalm 26:**

**I. INTRODUCTION:**

I remember it like yesterday. I was sixteen years old. It was a Monday morning. I was sitting in a technical theatre class in high school learning the ins and outs of lighting. I was wearing my light blue stone washed guess jeans, an Ocean Pacific t-shirt, and my checkered vans, when my high school teacher receives a phone call in the classroom. When this phone rang, everyone in the class knew it wasn't a good thing. Something is wrong. Someone is in trouble.

My awesome high school teacher, a man I dearly love to this day, came up to my desk with a very concerned look and said, "Paul, your mom is at the front office. It is an emergency. Just leave your stuff here; I will take care of it. Just go."

Imagining the worst given my dad's occupation and the health situation of both sets of my grandparents, who all lived in El Paso, I rushed out of the office. I go to the front entrance of the school and my mom is nowhere to be found. I looked outside and I can't find her car. I walked back into the school, and nothing; I can't find her anywhere. Then all of a sudden, a strange looking, skinny lady with big tinted glasses that seemed to covered half her face comes up to me out of nowhere, and says, "Paul, I've been looking for you." She hands me a piece of paper with an address. She says, "I know you stole my company's money bag when you put my groceries in the backseat of my car yesterday afternoon. If you come to my house at 10pm tonight, I won't tell the police. She repeated her instructions with her finger pointing to the piece of paper, "10pm tonight. This address." She quickly walked out of the door. I was speechless. Here I was imagining the worst, looking for my mom, and this happened.

I was stunned. I walked backed into the classroom. Immediately, my teacher realized something was wrong. He grabs a chair and tells me to sit down; I must have been very pale. I looked at him and all I could say at first was, "It

wasn't my mom." He said, "What?" I handed him the piece of paper. Once I gained my composure, explained what happened. He picked up the phone. He immediately called the principal's office.

I vaguely recognized her face. It was the day before, a rainy Sunday and I was carrying groceries to her car. I remember her asking questions about me, questions other adults don't ask a sacker working at a grocery store. But I didn't think much about it except that I am a redhead. ☺ I quickly put the groceries in her car. She gave me a nice tip. I ran off back inside to get out of the rain and help the next customer.

The teacher asked me to walk through every detail. I have no memory of seeing any sort of moneybag in the backseat of her car. I just remember the smell of cigarettes.

The principal was on his way. My parents were called. My mom...like... showed up in seconds. Principal sent me home for the day. My mom didn't play any games for no one messes with one of her kids. Things can quickly get done in a small East Texas town.

That afternoon our lawyer is involved, police involved, grocery store involved, and school involved. A restraining order was placed on her. Trespassing charges would be filed if she ever stepped on school property. She was not even allowed to shop at the grocery store or come anywhere near me. Later that week I received a letter from her apologizing to me via grocery store; she mysteriously found the missing money. But everyone, including the police, thinks she had something else planned for me.

***Transition:***

Before the events involving Bathsheba took place, King David, a man after God's own heart, was falsely charged by his enemies for some type of wrongdoing. We don't know the nature of the accusation; all we know is that it placed his integrity in question. His troubles were undeserved; he was suffering. How does David handle the situation when his integrity was challenged? We will find out here in Psalm 26.

In fact, what we discover here in this Psalm could perhaps change the way you pray and live, if you and I are so daring!

But I am not only thinking about those moments when our integrity is in question like King David's, but also those challenges that threaten our integrity within. I suspect many of us have certain propensities, temptations, or hauntings that follow our footsteps. We confess our sins, we try to do the right things, like prayer, Scripture, and church, but there are certain temptations that continue to captivate our attention. Time and time again we feel that comfortable and all too familiar grip, one that continues to spoil the best parts of us and leave us broken, broken, and again broken. We hate these particular temptations but we can't seem to be free from them.

Perhaps it was a certain propensity, a haunting of sexual immorality that contributed to an ill-fated moment for King David. It was evening time and...

David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,<sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."<sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.<sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Therefore, what can we do to strengthen our resolve whereby our desires and our conduct are in ever in harmony with our identity in Christ?

The title of this morning's message is, "The Challenge of Integrity: An Exposition of Psalm 26.

**PSALM 26: If I could summarize this psalm in one statement it would be that David asks for God's vindication because of his personal integrity.**

1. David asserts that he is a person of integrity: (vv. 1-3)
2. David gives proof of his integrity (vv. 4-8)
3. David prays for a reward in view of his integrity (vv. 9-12)

**What is integrity?**

1. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*: Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; he was a man of the

highest personal integrity. It is also associated with wholeness and unity.

2. Words like soundness of moral character; unimpaired; the state of being whole.

3. Zig Ziglar:

"With integrity, you have nothing to fear; since you have nothing to hide. With integrity, you will do the right thing, so, you will have no guilt."

4. Anonymous:

"Integrity is not something you show others. It is how you behave behind their back."

5. Anonymous:

"Integrity is choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy; and choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them."

## II. ASSERTION OF INTEGRITY: PSALM 26:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>Vindicate me, O Lord, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. <sup>2</sup>Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart. <sup>3</sup>For your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth.*

A Therefore, in view in order to "clear" his name, "demonstrate" his integrity against his accusers, he appeals to God. Let's look at verse 1:

*<sup>1</sup>Vindicate me, O Lord, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip.*

B. *The Net Bible translates verse 1 puts it this way:*

*Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have integrity, and I trust in the LORD without wavering.*

- C. I love the way it is framed in Hebrew: "for I in my integrity walk."
1. The word vindicate, *shaphat*, usually means "judge me." Here it implies declare righteous. Why?
  2. Because David conducts his life with moral goodness; he is blameless before God and is not liable for sin or wrong. Interestingly, this word "integrity" is the same word used to characterize Job in Job 1: "*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*"
    - a. This word, which is also part of the high priest's breastplate, carries the nuances of completeness, innocence, and that which is upright.
  3. Moreover, David asserts that his trust, his reliance is in God.
  4. Then David says, "*I shall not slip.*" David's trust in God is unfaltering because his trust is in Him. Therefore, because he is relying on God he will not slip, waver, wobble, turn, or go out of control (Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 5:18).

**First principle: Strengthen your integrity. How? Rely on God in moment-by-moment living. All other sources are inadequate, finite, limited, and frail. They will not do.**

- D. Like using crutches with broken legs, rely on Him. Depend on our infinite and perfect God in moment-by-moment living for time is a succession of moments. This demands focus, intention, and humility. This requires being Holy Spirit-controlled. Three steps:
1. First, yield or submit yourself to the Lord. In other words, dedicate your entire life to him in an act of consecration. Each and every day you live that commitment to the Lord out by

yielding yourself to Him in the choices you make, the pleasures you enjoy, and the priorities you pursue.

2. Second, you refuse to conform yourself to this world's goods, priorities, and motives. In other words, do not appear veneered with the world when you are a Christian underneath. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you are in Christ and Christ is in you. You have a new identity. A cheap finish applied to a priceless treasure will not do!
3. And third, don't merely yield yourself to the Lord through dedication and separation; you transform your mind. You must transform your mind, where most of the battle of integrity begins, with your thought-life by intimately knowing the Scriptures. This demands deep meditation, a daily discipline. Spirit-Filled believer is also a Scripture-filled believer.
  1. A. W. Tozer once observed, "Every man is as holy as he really wants to be. But the want must be all compelling. ...Every man is as full of the Spirit as he wants to be."

**First principle: Strengthen your integrity; rely on God in moment-by-moment living. But verse 2 invites a second insight:**

- E. Related to verse 1 is perhaps one of the boldest requests ever made in Scripture. King David invites God to scrutinize his life. Look closely at verse 2:

*<sup>2</sup> Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.*

- F. David invites God of the Hebrew people to scrutinize his life: "Examine me Lord and prove: test my mind and my heart:
  1. This word **examine** means to put someone to the test. Like setting someone before a trial, a doctoral comprehensive exam, it is a formal examination.

- 2 The word **prove** means to demonstrate by evidence. The word may be likened to the idea of a smelter, refining metals. In other words, God, look for impurities within me. David is not saying that He is without sin. But in view of this accusation made by his enemies, he is declaring He is a man of integrity.
3. The word **try** means to probe. He was confident that when the Lord would do this, He would find David to be blameless.

**G.** Look at these key words: **Examine; Try; Prove**, and consider this question: *Where does he invite this scrutiny?* Both his mind and heart. In other words, He is offering himself "completely for a total examination."

1. My mind: inmost being , i.e., heart, mind, spirit of a man as a core of the inner person;
2. Heart, mind, soul, spirit, self, i.e., the source of life of the inner person in various aspects, with a focus on feelings, thoughts, volition, and other areas of the inner life.
3. In other words, King David is offering himself "completely for a total examination" by Him who is the all-knowing, everywhere present, all-powerful God of the universe.
4. So the future scrutiny we will certainly at the Judgment Seat of Christ, David is asking God to scrutinize his life in the now. David believes that what God will find is that he is beyond reproach.

**H.** Strengthen your integrity by relying on God; yield yourself to God in moment-by-moment living. Don't merely rely on God, regularly ask Him to scrutinize your mind, your heart, your affections, your will. Let Him refine you. What should motivate you to make such a bold request Consider verse 3: ***For your loving-kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth.***

1. By saying "before my eyes," David means "I am always aware of" or "I keep in mind" your loyal love. So, he is saying that I always remember that you love me faithfully. This word, "*hesed*," loyal love, is one of the powerful, meaningful words in Hebrew Scriptures, a central theme in the Psalms.

a. God has your best interest at heart. He loves you with infinite goodness, infinite graciousness, infinitely loyal to what is best for you. He has committed himself in absolute love to you.

b. No matter what you are experiencing, you must not forget this one simple truth, namely His unyielding, steadfast love to you! God is not out to get you. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you are now part of his family. Like when my mom came to my rescue, He will come to yours and apply all of His resources with your best interest at heart.

c. Blaise Pascal made this incredible observation:

"Jesus is the God whom we can approach without pride and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair."

I. David is not afraid to ask God: Because God loves David unconditionally. God loves you too. He is not a whimsical or sadistic-type God. He is not arbitrary but is the sum-total of His infinite perfections. He loves you so much that His son willfully sacrificed Himself on the cross to take your sins away so you can have eternal life. Because what Jesus did on your behalf, it is no longer a sin question but a Son question. What love! Therefore, if we make this request of Him, it will only strengthen our integrity. See David intimately knows God. So, he trusts Him. Do you? Can you?

**III. PROOF OF INTEGRITY: 26:4-8**

A. Consequently, this integrity is not only evidenced by his reliance in God and even to make such a bold request to scrutinize his mind, heart, and affections, but also in view of the associations he keeps, both negatively and positively. Here he offers proof of his integrity. In verses 4-5 we see with whom he refuses to be identified.

<sup>4</sup> *I have not sat with idolatrous mortals. Nor will I go in with hypocrites.*

<sup>5</sup> *I have hated the assembly of evildoer, and will not sit with the wicked.*

B. 26:4-5 David cited his separation from sinners and their assemblies as evidence that he was not wicked and deceitful (cf. 1:1). He was not speaking of his social preference but of his spiritual commitment. These were enemies of the Lord.

1. Idolatrous morals are men of worthlessness: they are those who give themselves to the pursuit of vanity, scoundrels, imposters, and deceitful men. Interestingly, this phrase is sometimes expressed as "people who cheat others."

2. Hypocrites are those whose ways and motives are hidden from others. Literally, they are those whose ways are hidden. The word "go in" generally means the idea of associating with, consorting; it is the idea of "keep company with."

3. Gathering of evildoers: and will not sit (dwell, remain) with the Wicked. Evildoers denote wickedness: it denotes the negative behavior of evil thoughts, words and deeds, a behavior not only contrary to God's character, but also hostile to the community and which at the same time betrays the inner disharmony and unrest of a man.

4. So, he is not identified with the vain, those with hidden and wrong motives, or those who are hostile toward God.

C. Positively, his activity of association is worshipping the God He loves. He knows where to be!

*<sup>6</sup> I will wash my hands in innocence; So will go about Your altar, O Lord, <sup>7</sup> that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. <sup>8</sup> Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where your glory dwells.*

1. He identifies himself with worshipping God. What an identity! By using the word innocence, he is literally saying, "empty, bare" that is, there is no wrongdoing or "God, I have done no wrong."
2. The altar was more than just the place of sacrifice; it symbolized God's table, where his fellowship and presence could be known. It is the place where people worship God.
3. 26:6-8 He preferred the sanctuary of the Lord to the meeting places of the wicked (cf. v. 5). Washing the hands in innocence is a figurative way of saying that his actions were righteous (cf. Matt. 27:24). He offered sacrifices to God in worship and praised God rather than ignoring Him as the wicked did.
4. Lord, I have loved (*ahab*) the habitation of Your house, and the glorious splendor of you!

**Strengthen your integrity: rely on God in moment-by-moment living. Don't merely rely on God, regularly ask Him to scrutinize your mind, your heart, your affections, your will. But don't merely ask Him to scrutinize your whole person, resist those who will corrupt you in your comings and goings. Identify yourself with worshipping God from out of your heart (deep seated affections), your soul (conscious thought life), your mind (ability to think, discern, judge), and strength (your bodily powers).**

#### IV. PRAYER FOR REWARD: PSALM 26:9-12

*<sup>9</sup> Do not gather my soul with sinners, Nor my life with bloodthirsty men, <sup>10</sup> in whose hands is a sinister scheme, And whose right hand is full of bribes. <sup>11</sup> But as for me, I will walk in my integrity, Redeem me and be merciful to me. <sup>12</sup> My foot stands in an even place; In the congregation I will bless the Lord.*

1. 26:9-10 David asked God to spare him from a premature death in the company of the wicked. Evidently he expected God to judge the wicked this way and wanted God to separate him from them in His judgment as David had separated himself from them in his behavior. It appears that some people were grouping David together with others who were wicked in their thinking, but he did not want God to do that. His prayer here is urgent.
2. 26:11-12 Having called on God to do right, the psalmist promised to do the same. He would continue to do right as he waited for God to redeem him from his trouble. "Redeem" (Heb. *padah*) means to ransom or purchase out of trouble. This word often refers to the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 7:8; 2 Sam. 7:23; Mic. 6:4).
3. David felt he was on solid footing in his request and looked forward to praising God publicly for saving him from his accusers. This stands in contrast to the possibility that he was accused of something publicly.

**Third insight: When you fellowship with God in integrity, you will be able to pray with confidence to the Lord. Like James 5:16 says, It is the prayer of a righteous person that is effectual. You know Him. He knows you!**

David can appeal confidently for vindication from the false accusations of spiritual enemies because he has a righteous standing before Him. Once more, this was not a claim to being sinless but to being righteous because of God's work in his life. The upright behavior of the righteous is evidence that David, by God's grace, different from the wicked.

**Strengthen your integrity: rely on God in moment-by-moment living. Don't merely rely on God, regularly ask Him to scrutinize your mind, your heart, your affections, your will. But don't merely ask Him to scrutinize your whole person, resist those who will corrupt you in your comings and goings. Identify yourself with worshipping God from out of your heart (deep seated affections), your soul (conscious thought life), your mind (ability to think, discern, judge), and strength (your bodily powers). When you fellowship with God in integrity, then you will be able**

to pray with confidence to the Lord. Your feet will stand in an even place.

## V. HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

1. If God has called us to be holy, to make Him our singular passion, then it seems that it would be spiritually profitable to invite God's scrutiny in our lives.
  - a. Can we as believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, make the same assertion to God as David did? Can we say to him, God, I have walked in my integrity; I walk in such a way that it reveals that I trust you. Examine me, God. Scrutinize my heart and mind, and you will see that it is the case. I have walked in your truth! If we can, we should keep asking God to scrutinize our lives? For no one is immune to sin. It can lead us to places we never thought possible. Moreover, if we don't continually invite God's scrutiny, we may forget that it is all about Him. Thus, our spirituality becomes our pride. If we can say to God that we are faithful, blameless believers, it is not because of our own effort, but because we have allowed the Holy Spirit to work in us; we are people who yield to God in the moment-by-moment details of daily living. Be careful of pride.
2. If you and I are reluctant to ask for God's scrutiny, why?
  - a. Has sin become more attractive than God, why?
  - b. Are we ashamed?
  - c. Are we trying to hide from God?
  - d. Do we not know who this God is? But Remember God's *Hesed!*
3. But then you may say, Doc Shock, I try to live faithfully before God, I actively seek to be pro-active in my spiritual life...but I find myself repeatedly committing the same sins over and over again. I understand. I have that same problem too.

When I became a solo pastor for the very first time, I so wanted to live beyond reproach and be an example as one who is victorious; this can be lived

out. I had this continual problem of repeating the same sins over and over again.

1. Confession of sin didn't take the desire away from doing it.
2. Repentance, being mournful over it or even changing my mind about it, didn't take those desires away.
3. It made me question whether my confessions were sincere.
4. Sure enough, I would commit them again.

But I finally found relief! During my first pastorate our church invited Dr. John Hannah, a DTS professor, to be our speaker for our annual spiritual life conference. I asked him to speak about cultivating affections for God following the rich insights of Jonathan Edwards. But one evening he spoke about how to subdue if not break down certain sinful propensities within whereby they would not have such a hold on us as we walk with the Lord.

Since I was a pastor who wanted to be an example to my congregation, showing them how to live this spiritually mature life, I longed to be a man who no longer had certain sinful desires and propensities within. So, I would often find myself praying, praying, and praying, asking God to remove those sinful desires from me. Unfortunately, after I would pray that God would take those desires away, it would not be too long later that I found myself committing that sin again. Why?

See, what I was doing was confusing confession of sin with "mortification of sin." In other words, I was fighting the wrong battle. Confession of sin does not remove one's desires for that sin. Confession of sin acknowledges my wrongdoing before God (1 John 1:9). Confession of sin also restores my intimacy whereas mortification of sin subdues and may eventually break the desire I have for that sin (s). Once I realized that earnest confession of sin will not remove the desire for that sin, but instead restore my intimacy with God, I found liberation. How? See, I realized that there were certain sins I've fed for so long that they my desire for them may continue to follow me for the remainder of my days on this earth. But what I can do is subdue their power over my lives, that is, break them down so that they don't have such a grip over my life.

How is this made possible?

When these temptations repeatedly hit us like waves against a seawall, we are not only walk to by means of the Holy Spirit, but we are also to regularly mortify the flesh. Self-discipline is insufficient.

<p><b>VI. MORTIFICATION OF SIN: (Principles adapted from Dr. John Hannah's discussion of mortification of sin):</b></p>
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- A. To mortify a sin then involves the following:
1. Subdue a sinful appetite, tendency, or temptation;
  2. Deprive the sin of its power;
  3. To break the sinful habit that we developed we must continually refuse to give into the temptation of that particular sin.
  4. The goal of mortification is to weaken if not break a sinful habit or the yielding to a particular sin in your life that will one day become a habit:  
  
*"Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. So a character, reap a destiny."*
  5. The overall means to breaking a habitual sin or fleshly tendency in your life is to be whole heartily obedient to Scripture by means of the Holy Spirit, whereby both inward desires and outward conformity harmonize together.
- B. **Colossians 3:5**
1. **"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."**
  2. The Greek tense of this command "Put to death" implies a decisive action, as if Paul said, "Do it now!"

C. **Romans 8:13:**

**"For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death [mortify] the misdeeds of the body, you will live."**

1. "You put to death" implies it is your responsibility.
2. The verb literally is "putting to death" is in present tense. It is to be continuous in the life of the believer.
3. You must be dependent on the Holy Spirit as stated in the phrase "but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body [or "flesh"]." Once again, self-discipline is insufficient. We must be controlled by the Holy Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

D. **8 Steps of Mortification (adapted from Dr. John Hannah):**

1. **Consider the dangerous consequences of sin both vertically and horizontally.**
  - a. Vertically; Guilt; loss of peace & strength, grieve the Holy Spirit, & wound Christ);
  - b. Horizontally: sin impacts the lives of others.
2. **Load the conscience with the guilt of sin** (consider God's infinite patience & forbearance). God has so good to you. Why would you want to do that to Him?
3. **Consider the state of one's self all times in terms of frailty, because of depravity, (potential of) vileness, and inherent selfishness.** You are nothing more than a cheese nip cracker on the floor of a childcare center. Wrong place at the wrong time and you are crushed.
4. **Trace the particular manifestation of sin to its root.** We need to ask why we do what we do! It is not enough to deal with the fruit. You must take it to the root. Why am I more attracted to this particular sin than I am to God?

5. **Don't hurry to gain relief for your sin.** Though we are to immediately confess our sins (1 John 1:9) we need to understand the "angst" of and consider the seriousness of yielding to sin. In other words, we need to send ourselves into a room and deeply consider all the ramifications why we do what we do (motivations why), who we hurt, inflict pain upon, and where it could potentially take me.
6. **Act quickly against the first temptations toward sin: Flee!** If we could only see sin from God's perspective...the stench that sin really is, we would flee from it instead of entertaining the fleeting satisfactions and eventual destruction it brings.
7. **Allow God to speak peace rather than assume you have it.** We can delude ourselves into thinking that we are more spiritually mature than we actually are, no matter how many Bible passages you have memorized or how much doctrine you know. Once again, invite God to scrutinize your innermost thoughts, desires, and affections; see where you stand in your conformity to Christ
8. **Mental Weapons in the struggle against persistent sinful appetites and tendencies is the practice of biblical truth:** it involve whole hearted trust, faith, & obedience; the presence of right thoughts; recognition of God's sovereignty, the effects of sin, the love & kindness of God, the wonder of our salvation, & the reality of wickedness, enslaving potentialities of sin, and the stench it is before God.

<b>VII: CONCLUSION:</b>
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**Strengthen your integrity: rely on God in moment-by-moment living. Don't merely rely on God, regularly ask Him to scrutinize your mind, your heart, your affections, your will. But don't merely ask Him to scrutinize your whole person, resist those who will corrupt you in your comings and goings. Identify yourself with worshipping God from out of your heart (deep seated affections), your soul (conscious thought life), your mind (ability to think, discern, judge), and strength (your bodily powers). When you fellowship with God in integrity, then you will be able to pray with confidence to the Lord. Your feet will stand in an even place.**

**VIII: FINAL THOUGHT:**

Dr. George Sweeting once shared this story:

"Several years ago our family visited Niagara Falls. It was spring, and ice was rushing down the river. As I viewed the large blocks of ice flowing toward the falls, I could see that there were carcasses of dead fish embedded in the ice. Gulls by the score were riding down the river feeding on the fish. As they came to the brink of the falls, their wings would go out, and they would escape from the falls.

"I watched one gull which seemed to delay and wondered when it would leave. It was engrossed in the carcass of a fish, and when it finally came to the brink of the falls, out went its powerful wings. The bird flapped and flapped and even lifted the ice out of the water, and I thought it would escape. But it had delayed too long so that its claws had frozen into the ice. The weight of the ice was too great, and the gull plunged into the abyss."

Like David did when he took an evening stroll from his place and looked out his balcony to see a beautiful woman bathing, sin can take you places you never thought you would go. These truths must be practiced continuously because we are in unredeemed bodies in a world whose system is bent to see you compromise and fall into ruin. Like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, it may not take a gross calamity to do it; it may only take a distraction, something precious. But as one of the greatest theologians ever born on American soil shared with me in his twilight years, "The sins of my youth continue to haunt me today, but as I've walked with the Lord, they have lost their attractiveness."

Selah. Pause, and let that sink in.