

Vav
Psalm 119:41-48
ABC 6/10/18

Open your Bibles with me to Ps 119. We're going to be looking at vss 41-48 as we continue our way through this great psalm. This was an easy stanza for the psalmist to write because it is the Vav stanza & Vav means *and*. Not many Hebrew words begin with Vav, so the author solved the problem by beginning each verse with *and*. Alexander Maclaren gives an English translation of this stanza which begins like this:

*And let thy loving kindnesses come to me, Jehovah ...
And I shall have a word to answer him that reproaches me ...
And pluck not the word of truth out of my mouth ... & so on.¹*

Once again, this is a passage that teaches us how to live the Christian life. This is God's Word, listen as we read **41-48**.

How do you live the Christian life? This psalm answers not only unambiguously, it answers helpfully. You live the Christian life by faith. Have you heard that before? You live the Christian life by faith in God, you live the Christian life by faith in His promises, & you live the Christian life by faith in His Word.

1. Our Salvation is According to Promise & the Christian Life is Lived by Faith 41

This is the 1st mention of **salvation** in Ps 119 & it's joined with God's mercies or **lovingkindnesses**. It is **Your salvation**, meaning salvation is completely of God. The proof of God's love is His provision of salvation for sinners. It's out of His great love that salvation comes. When the OT saints wrote about salvation they only had a basic idea of all that was involved. We live on this side of the cross & know how the love of God & the death of Christ came together. Paul linked the 2 ideas in Rom 5: **For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (7-8)**. Nor can we forget Jn 3:16, the best-known verse in the Bible. **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life**. Spurgeon said,

¹ *The Psalms*, p 256

The way of salvation is described in God's Word; salvation itself is promised in the Word; & it's inward manifestation is wrought by the Word; so that in all respects the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is in accordance with God's Word.²

Our salvation is from the Lord & our salvation is according to His promise. It's important for us as believers to get both of those things in our head. Our salvation is from the Lord & our salvation is according to His promise. What that means is that our trust must be deliberately, consciously, & specifically focused on Him & His Word. & it means we must live by faith. Our salvation is from the Lord & our salvation is according to His promise. That means our faith must be in Him & in His Word & we must live by that faith.

Lovingkindnesses is the Hebrew word *hesed*. This is one of the most theological significant words in the OT. Although much has been written about it, *its depths are unfathomable, & its multifaceted connotations seem to be irreducible.*³ Translators have struggled with how to translate it & all our English words fail to capture the depth & breadth of it. It occurs about 250 times in the OT. It's a kind of love, including mercy, when the object of this love is in a pitiful state. Perhaps *grace* is as good or even better than **lovingkindness**. Grace depends on who & what God is, never on who or what we are. Because God is permanent, His grace, His **lovingkindness** is also permanent. *Hesed* is a key attribute in God's description of Himself in Ex 34:6-7 where he says, **The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate & gracious, slow to anger, & abounding in lovingkindness & truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression & sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.** Not only does it describe God, it's also an obligation that's placed on all of His people in Micah 6:8. Yet because there's no exact English equivalent, it's proved hard for Bible translators to render it accurately. In various versions, it appears as *lovingkindness, kindness, faithfulness, mercy, goodness, loyalty, & steadfast love*. Love & loyalty are combined in this one word. *Hesed* usually describes something that happens within a relationship, whether between 2 humans or between God & man. In human relationships, *hesed* implies loving our neighbor, not merely in terms of emotional feelings but in acts of love & service that we owe to the other person simply because

² Spurgeon, *The Golden Alphabet*, www.gospelweb.net/SpurgeonGoldenAlphabet/FS_GoldenAlphabet.htm

³ George J Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God*, p 149

he's part of God's family. God has told us, **what is good; & what does the Lord require of us but to do justice, to have *hesed*, & to walk humbly with our God** (Micah 6:8). An example of this that defines our responsibilities is the parable that Jesus told about the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–37). A neighbor had the obligation to help a community member who was in trouble. Yet this obligation to show *hesed* was rejected by the priest & the Levite, who passed the wounded man on the other side of the road. In this story, the true neighbor was the Samaritan who showed mercy to the stranger (37). Not coincidentally, the Greek word for *mercy* is the same one normally used to translate *hesed* in the Greek OT. The most precious use of the word *hesed* in the OT is as a description of what God does. Having entered into a relationship with His people, God bound Himself to act toward them in certain ways, & He is utterly faithful to do as He promises. Ps 136 explores what the Lord's *hesed* means as each line concludes with the words, **For His *hesed* is everlasting**. Because of the Lord's *hesed*, He created the universe & rules it daily through His providence (Ps 136:5–9, 25). Because of His *hesed* toward Israel, He redeemed them out of Egypt & brought them through the Red Sea & the wilderness into the Promised Land. For the same reason, He hurled the Egyptians into the sea & struck down the Canaanite kings before them (11–21). Both His deliverance of His people & His destruction of their enemies are aspects God's faithfulness to His promise to make Abraham a mighty nation, blessing those who bless him & cursing those who curse him (Gen 12:1–3). Even when His people sin against Him & face the consequences of their sin, they may still appeal to the Lord's *hesed*, as the writer of Lamentations does in the midst of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Surrounded by the evidence of the Lord's faithfulness to judge wickedness, rebellion, & sin, he casts himself on the unchanging character of God, saying, **The LORD'S *hesed* indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness** (Lam 3:22–23). In Ps 23:6, David declares that the Lord's **goodness & *hesed* will follow** him all the days of his life. The Lord's faithful love & goodness will hunt him down relentlessly.

The fullness of God's *hesed* is seen at the cross where Jesus Himself, the only human ever to be completely loyal to the Lord & to His neighbor in every area of life, was treated as a law-breaker

& cursed for sin so that we who are unfaithful might be clothed in His righteousness & be redeemed. The Lord's *hesed* will never let us go. In the midst of life's trials & tragedies, we may cry out to our loving Lord in confidence that nothing in all creation can ever separate us from the His love that chose us before time began, is sanctifying us in the present, & will faithfully bring us to our eternal home (Rom. 8:28–30).

Notice as well in Ps 119:41 that *hesed* is plural, **lovingkindnesses**. God's gracious mercy to us is so great that it can only be described in the plural, with mercy piled on top of mercy. We're spending a lot of time on vs 41 because it's so rich. Here he also focuses the hope of his salvation on the Lord as he adds, **Your salvation according to Your Word or promise**. What he's teaching us is that the focus of our trust in the Christian life must be deliberately on the Lord & His Word. Spurgeon has a book called, *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith*.⁴ One of the things Spurgeon does in it is pile up Bible promises to believers so we might meditate on them. This is a vs that tells us it's OK to come to God & plead for His salvation because He's promised it to us! He's promised, *Come to Me, ask for My lovingkindness; I'll give you My salvation!* So we live by pleading those promises. Therefore, our trust must be in the Lord & in His Word. William Plumer says this about this passage, *The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. Every deliverance from peril, trial, or affliction is to be sought from Him alone*.⁵ This often isn't our 1st instinct. When we're going through tough times, often the very last thing we do is call out to the Lord. The 1st thing we do is try to figure it out ourselves. We try to fix it. We try & rescue ourselves. & here the psalmist says, *The 1st instinct of the believer in living the Christian life is to resort to the Lord, to trust in the Lord, to seek our salvation from Him & according to His Word & promises*. Our salvation is from the Lord & our salvation is according to His promise which teaches us that the Christian life must be lived by trust in Him & in His Word. God, in His grace & lovingkindness, has saved us & given us Christ's righteousness to cover us, His Almighty arm sustains us, & eternal glory awaits us. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?

⁴ <https://archive.org/details/thechequebookoft00purguoft>

⁵ *Studies in the Book of Psalms*, p 1041

The way we live the Christian life is by faith. We're not just justified by faith; we live the Christian life by faith. There are so many things we can't make sense of in this life by sight. By sight they don't make sense. & so we must live by faith. & that's a constant refrain in God's Word. The passage that Paul quotes from Habakkuk when he's explaining the doctrine of justification by faith says, **The just shall live by faith** (2:4). We are saved by faith (Eph 2:8-10), but it's also true that we live the Christian life by faith. The just, those who are declared righteous, who are justified by God, live how? By faith! Paul says the same thing in Rom 1:17, **The righteous shall live by faith**. Or think of what he says in Gal 2:20. **The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me & gave Himself for me**. The writer of Hebrews says, **My righteous one shall live by faith** (10:38). & the whole point of Heb 11 is we're to live this life as believers by faith! That's why we're called believers! We believe something. We have faith in something or someone. But it's hard to do, isn't it? We say we trust the Bible; we say we believe it's true. But many struggle with that for a variety of reasons. But the fact is our Savior believes the Bible is true. & if our Savior believes the Bible is true, it's an act of devotion on our part to believe that as well. If I'm going to put all my hopes on Jesus & Jesus believes the Bible is true, that pretty much decides it for me. But there are thousands of questions, many of them legitimate, that can bother the hearts & minds of believers. You run across passages that go against your thinking. You come to places in the Word of God where God asks you to do hard things. You come across passages that seem to pose contradictions. What do you do? You walk by faith. You believe that God knows more than you. We must come to the point where we say, *I walk by faith. When I don't understand, when I don't have the answer, I walk by faith*. That's the Christian life, walking by faith. Again, Plumer is helpful when he says,

It is impossible to do well in the Christian life or to maintain any successful war against sin unless we have faith. The Word of God is powerless to help us until it is believed. Its vast treasures are unlocked by the hand of faith only. Without faith, providence is absolutely crushing in many of its dispensations. Faith makes salvation ours. & then he ends with this sentence. He that will not trust shall not conquer.⁶

⁶ p 1041

That's so true. The Christian life is lived by faith. & before he can get out of the very 1st vs of this section of this psalm the psalmist is driving that point home. Our salvation is of the Lord. Our salvation is by His Word, according to His promise. Therefore the Christian life is lived by faith in the Lord & in His Word. Don't ever forget that the Christian life is lived by faith.

2. Be Prepared to Bear Reproach There's a sense in which this is one of the main themes of this whole section. The psalmist says he's going to trust in the Lord in His lovingkindness, in His salvation, in His Word or promise. Why? **42-43**

Do you see the context in which he's making this declaration? He's standing for the Lord, he's standing for the Word, & he's expecting to be taunted, mocked, ridiculed, & made fun of! We see it again in vs **46**.

What the psalmist was praying for here Jesus affirms in Mt 10:18-19, which says, **you will even be brought before governors & kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.** I wonder if Paul meditated on Ps 119:46 before he went to Caesar's court in Rome. I wonder if it was one of the vss he thought about. Maybe, maybe not. But whatever the case, clearly the context is one which the psalmist fears could bring shame & reproach on him in the eyes of his enemies. What do we learn from this? That we must be prepared to bear reproach for the sake of God, the Gospel, & the truth of God's Word. That's hugely important to understand, especially in this day & age. It's particularly important for you, young people. You're already living in a culture where to believe things that 2,000 years of believers have believed will bring the world's scorn to you. In the culture in which we live, to believe the things God says makes you look crazy or wicked in the eyes of the world. This is kind of ironic because we're usually the ones who are making moral judgment that someone else or the world is wicked. But today we're thought of as wicked if we believe what God's word says about traditional marriage & that adultery & homosexuality are wrong. We are wicked in the eyes of the world because we believe there's one God & only one way to Him. We're wicked if we

believe that the Word of God alone is true revelation from God, & I could go down the list. As Albert Mohler said this week,

Our society is going at anything that suggests that there is one God, one Gospel, one Savior.... In many ways that's the most revolutionary, the most incendiary Christian belief that is at stake right now—the fact we actually believe that we are bound by Scripture.... The very fact we believe we are bound by Scripture is increasingly going to be a public scandal.⁷

You will be thought morally wrong, archaic, pig-headed, & intolerant for believing God's Word & you will be mocked. We see this all around us & some Christians give in. They're saying things like, *We need to rethink what Christianity has believed about these things.* What are they doing? They're crumbling under reproach! They're saying, *It's time for us to rethink same-sex marriage. Maybe we've been wrong on this.* What is that? That's crumbling under reproach. They start reinterpreting Scripture, changing it because they don't want to bear the reproach. Young people, I urge you & pray that you would sweetly but bravely bear reproach for remaining faithful to God & His Word. Not belligerently looking for a fight, but lovingly. I want you to have a face shining like Stephen's & to have his backbone as well so that when you're mocked by this culture you stand with God & His Word against the world because you love them & want them to come to know your Savior as well. Listen again to the wise words of William Plumer.

If we suffer reproach & persecution, nothing new has happened to us. Saul hunted David like a partridge upon the mountains. Shimei cursed him as if he had been the vilest of malefactors. Christ's murderers reviled Him, & when dying taunted Him. Paul said in 1 Tim 4:10, 'We both labor & suffer reproach because we trust in the living God.'⁸

So here's your choice: You're either going to trust in the living God & bear reproach or you're not going to be reproached because you don't trust the living God. These are your only options. I wonder if this section of Ps 119 isn't behind a fascinating passage in the book of Acts. Turn with me to Acts 4. This is the believers praying in the aftermath of the release of Peter & John. Vss 23-26 say,

When Peter & John had been released, they went to their own companions & reported all that the chief priests & the elders had said to them. & when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord & said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN & THE EARTH & THE SEA, & ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,

⁷ www.ligonier.org/blog/parenting-and-cultural-pressure-conform/

⁸ p 1041

'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, & THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, & THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD & AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'"

Notice it's all in the context of reproach. Peter & John have preached God's Word & the kings of the earth have set themselves against them; they're reproaching them. So they pray in vs 27, **For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod & Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles & the peoples of Israel.** It's exactly the scene of Ps 119:46. They go on to say this in vss 28-29: **To do whatever Your hand & Your purpose predestined to occur. & now, Lord, take note of their threats & what? Are these Christians saying, *They're threatening us, Lord; they're persecuting us & reproaching us, Lord. Time for us to change our message!*** Nope. Here's their prayer: **Grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.** Look at the answer to the prayer request in vs 31. **& when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, & they were all filled with the Holy Spirit & began to speak the word of God with boldness.** They prayed, *Lord, give us the faith to continue to speak with confidence!* & the Lord answered their prayer & they boldly spoke. That's what we all need to pray, especially you young people, that you will continue to believe & speak the Word with boldness, no matter the reproach. Finally, be sure you see ...

3. The Perfect Freedom of God's Teachings. Back to Ps 119. For those of us who've been saved by grace, for those of us who know we're accepted in the Beloved, God's Law is perfect freedom. The Law doesn't rain on your parade. The Law doesn't constrain you & repress you. It's perfect freedom. Look at **44**.

The words translated **continually, forever, & ever** are 3 different Hebrew words. It could be translated *always, eternally, & forever*. It's a way of saying the psalmists' obedience is going to go on & on. There will never be a time when the godly stop obeying God. He's not claiming to have kept the Law perfectly & eternally. It's an aspiration. *It's what I want to do, Lord.*

Unfortunately, we're often like the guy the Daily Bread wrote about several years ago:

I heard a story about a small church that was having a reunion. A former member who attended the celebration had become a millionaire. When he testified about how God had blessed him over the years, he related an incident from his childhood.

He said that when he earned his first dollar as a boy, he decided to keep it for the rest of his life. But then a guest missionary preached about the urgent need on the mission field. He struggled about giving his dollar. "The Lord won, however," the man said. Then, with a sense of pride he added, "I put my treasured dollar in the offering basket. And I am convinced that the reason God has blessed me so much is that when I was a little boy I gave Him everything I possessed." The congregation was awestruck by the testimony—until a little old lady in front piped up, "I dare you to do it again!"

There's a vital truth behind that story: Past attainments are not a measure of present spiritual maturity. Psalm 119:44 says, "So shall I keep Your law continually." The psalmist knew he needed to keep his commitment fresh every day.

As Christians, we cannot rest on past victories. We must give the Lord our full devotion now. Then no one will need to challenge us, "I dare you to do it again!"⁹

Obedience has been, & continues throughout this psalm to be, a priority. We can't rest on what we've done in the past. The psalmist set his sights high & perpetual obedience is his aim & goal.

We must do the same. But it's also a declaration about something God has done in him. **45**

We'll talk about this **liberty** in just a minute, so keep it in mind. Although we often don't think this way, sin is slavery & holiness is liberty. Let us live as the children of God, the heirs of His kingdom, grateful, free, redeemed, remembering the infinite cost at which our freedom was purchased. Look at vs **47**.

He's talking about God's commandments. Does he see them as a chore & drudgery? No, he uses the language of **delight** & **love**. Have you noticed the progression in this psalm? 1st the Word is appropriated by prayer in vs 41, then it's trusted in vss 42-43, then it's obeyed in vs 44, then it's sought in vs 45, & it's loved twice in vs **47 & 48**.

The lifting up of the hands refers to the longing desire which is expressed by the stretching out the hands, reaching for the commandments. As Spurgeon puts it,

He will stretch out towards perfection as far as he can, hoping to reach it one day.... Where holy hands & holy hearts go, the whole man will one day follow.... When mercy comes down, our hands will be lifted up; when we enjoy the consciousness that God thinks upon us with special love, we are sure to think of Him.¹⁰

The strength & the depth of the psalmist's love for God's Word is impressive. That love is shown not only in the feeling of **delight**, but also in an act of honor & longing (lifting the hands), & time & energy spent with God's Word (meditating on it). This is a good measure of our love for God's

⁹ David Egner, 2/3/2006

¹⁰ http://www.gospelweb.net/SpurgeonGoldenAlphabet/FS_GoldenAlphabet.htm

Word as well. Only a blood-bought, saved by grace, redeemed by Christ in His work in the gospel believer can say **47-48**.

Can you truthfully say that? The psalmist's not saying, *I love Your commandments, Lord, because that's how I save myself*. Or, *I love Your commandments, Lord, because You give me the dozen things I need to do in order to make myself right with You so that maybe, if I do them all the way to the end of my life, You might possibly accept me*. No, that's not what the psalmist is saying. He knows his salvation is what? *From the Lord* (41). It's according to promise, & that has set him free to delight in God's teachings & that is perfect freedom. Which brings us back to vs **45**.

Obedience & the pursuit of God's Word & wisdom leads to **liberty**. Disobedience, rejection of God's Word, & reliance upon one's own wisdom leads to bondage. This vs literally reads, *I will walk in a wide place*. The widest place in the universe is in the breadth & length & height & depth of the love of Christ. The psalmist says he **will walk**, indicating his daily progress through life, **at liberty**, as one who is out of prison, unimpeded by adversaries, unencumbered by burdens, unshackled, allowed a wide range, & roaming without fear. Don't you love watching a dog run free? But we rarely let our dogs run free. Why? Because they'll run off, knock elderly ladies over, & run into someone else's home. (& yes, our dogs have done all of those.) But when we go hiking, the leashes come off & they get to run free. When you're a believer, bought by the blood of Christ, & you know you're accepted in Him, & you're walking in the way of God's Law, you're as free as my daughters' dogs, we don't have one but we have 2 of theirs, running through the fields of Elk Creek. Again Plumer says,

*It is a great mercy to have the liberty of the sons of God. Tried often & terribly they may be, but he who walks at large, the truth having made him free, is far from seeing none but dark days. He goes on to say, quoting Matthew Henry, All that love God, love His government, & therefore love all His commandments.*¹¹

& those commandments are to us freedom. One of those freedoms is the boldness & ability to speak freely of God & His great Word before others, even kings. Have you ever been in bondage to a sin & you've been set free by God's grace, by the work of God's Spirit in your heart? You won't see God's commandment in the area of that sin as bondage, you'll see it as freedom. You

¹¹ p 1041

knew what slavery was. Keeping His commandment isn't slavery, it's freedom. & the psalmist is asking us to look at something that looks the exact opposite in the eyes of the world. In the eyes of the world, God's Law looks narrow, but to the believer it's broad & gives us space to run with no leash or even a collar on. The psalmist is telling us how to live the Christian life. You live it by faith in the Lord & in His promises, His Word, & in doing so, you find freedom & boldness. Let's pray.