

The Confident Heart Psalm 119:41-48

Intro: Verses 41-48 are about what I call *the confident heart*.

We are now on the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the first word of this eight-line stanza begins with the Hebrew letter *waw*. The funny thing is there are not many Hebrew words that begin with the consonant *waw*. One word that begins with the consonant *waw* is the word *and*. Beginning a sentence with the conjunction *and* is frowned upon in English and Hebrew. It usually weakens the idea of the sentence construction. However, this is poetry and it is poetry with a purpose so this grammatical faux pas did not stop the psalmist from beginning each line with the word "and" nor does it weaken his message. If anything the psalmist takes a weak conjunction to make it reveal the confidence of the word of God.

The English translations usually do not begin with the same letters or even words, however, this is one of those rare stanzas where it worked. Old Testament scholar Alec Motyer, in his devotional translation on the Psalms, helps us see how the Hebrew letter, *waw*, will translate each line from Hebrew to English with the word *and*.¹ His translation is found on page 2 of the service guide.

⁴¹*And, Yahweh, your committed love will come to me: your salvation according to your word.*

⁴²*And I will answer with a word whoever reproaches me, because I have put my trust in your word.*

⁴³*And do not at all snatch away the word of truth from my mouth, because I have put my hope in your judgments.*

⁴⁴*And oh I would keep your teaching continually, for ever and ever.*

⁴⁵*And oh I would walk around at liberty because I seek your precepts.*

⁴⁶*And oh I would speak of your testimonies before kings and not be embarrassed.*

⁴⁷*And oh I will find my elation in your commandments, which I love.*

⁴⁸*And I will lift up my hand according to your commandment, which I love, and I will muse on your statutes.*²

The use of the Hebrew letter *waw* is not just a literary device but by using the conjunction *and* he shows us that these are things that belong together. The connection reveals a steady progression of confidence in the word of God that grows in the believer's heart after conversion.

Confidence in God and His word was important in the psalmist's day and it is important question for us in today's culture. How can we have confidence in the word of God with the cultural upheaval that is going on today? **Verses 41-48** are a prayer for a growing confidence in God and His word. We will work through this psalm two verses at a time.

I. The confident heart has been completely converted by the word of God (vv. 41-42)

⁴¹*Let your steadfast love come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your promise;* ⁴²*then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word."*

The psalmist begins this stanza with a prayer of deep desire. He is asking God to show him His intimate, saving love that is based on the promise to rescue His people. The words *steadfast love* and *salvation* are God's activity and attitude toward His people.

The psalmist's prayer is more than just a relationship between the King and his subject. Instead when you examine the original language this is intimate language of a husband and wife. **It is an intimate prayer** of desire for God. **It is an intimate**

¹ John Calvin's translation reads with the word "and" at the beginning of each line but Alec Motyer's translation is easier to read and written in modern English.

² Alec Motyer, *Psalms by The Day: A New Devotional Translation*, 337-338.

prayer that God would fill his heart with His love and mercy. **It is the intimate language** of a husband wooing his wife with romantic language. **Verse 41** is a very personal and intimate prayer. This is not the language of religion but of relationship.

Also it is not just a prayer that God would show him this kind of love one time but would continually pour out His grace and mercy on him. The confidence that the psalmist has is grounded in God's unfailing word.

When we get to v. 42 we see why the psalmist desires God to show him tender grace and mercy. Often it is skeptics, the scoffers, the mockers and the reproach of others that can shake our faith and make us doubt God's love for us.

The book of the Psalms begins with Psalm 1 saying, *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."* There have always been those who ridicule and mock God and His word and it is when those times come that we need to delight in God's word.

It is the same today and this will never change. We have an enemy who hates God and His word. He wants to twist it and distort it so that he may remove your confidence in it. He does not want you to trust God when adversity comes into your life.

Psalm 42 is a Psalm that reveals how the Psalmist struggled with doubt. Listen to the lament in **Psalm 42**, a psalm of the **Sons of Korah . . .**

In the Garden the serpent questioned the word of God to Adam and Eve. **People ridiculed Noah** for obeying God and building an Ark before the flood. **Pharaoh taunted Moses** when Moses told him that God said for him to let His people go that they may worship Yahweh. **The prophets were mocked** for calling Israel to trust and obey God and return to Him. **Elijah fled** when Jezebel sought him. **Peter must have longed** to give the right answer to those who mocked him and accused him of knowing Jesus when he stood around the campfire in the courtyard the night before Jesus was crucified, yet instead he denied Jesus. **Even our Savior was mocked** when he was tortured and then when he hung on the cross. **The Pharisees** taunted him when they said, *"He trusts in God; let God deliver him, if he desires him."* **Jesus reply was** *Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.*

Our confidence is not grounded in knowing the right words with which to respond. The reply to those who taunt, mock and ridicule is not found in clever comebacks but in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All of the Bible is about Jesus and He is alive. **Jesus is the True and Better Adam** who resisted the temptation to sin against God in the wilderness and on the Mount of Olives by trusting in God's word. **Jesus is the True and Better Noah** who delivered His people from the flood of death in the ark of His salvation. **Jesus is the True and Better Moses** who accomplished the ultimate exodus for God's people by sealing the covenant in His own blood and rising from the dead.

When we pray in Jesus' name, we are not praying to some dead Savior but a risen Savior who is at the right hand of God interceding for us. He has given us His Holy Spirit to seal our hearts and pour out His grace upon us until He returns. It is the rescue that Jesus has performed for us on our behalf. Brothers and sisters, pray to God like Jesus has rescued you.

When taunts, doubts, mocking and ridicule come into your life you must preach back to the accomplished work of Christ for you and that you belong to Him. We must be confident in this fact. This is called faith.

We must pray knowing that Jesus still delivers His people. We may lament like the psalmist in **Psalm 42 saying:** *Lord when will you come to me? I have been crying all night long and all day long and people are making fun of me saying: Where is your God now? I am even beginning to wonder this myself. Lord come to me and show Your love to me. I am pouring out my soul to You. I remember the church with which You have surrounded me. I remember worshipping Jesus with them. Give me the courage to ask them*

to pray for me and help me. When I get depressed, restore to me the joy and hope of my salvation because of Your steadfast love is better than life. I know that my Redeemer lives. Make me believe this today.

This is the prayer of a thoroughly converted person. It does not mean you will never struggle. It means when you do you will pray prayers like this.

Psalm 42 reminds us that when we struggle that God has given us His church to surround us with fellow sufferers. Do not suffer alone.

Hebrews 10:19-25 reminds us of the same thing but in this word we see that our confidence is in Christ, ¹⁹ *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰ *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,* ²¹ *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* ²² *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* ²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

What about the people who taunt and mock? Go slow with them for some of you were mockers and ridiculers of the gospel at one time but someone took time to go slow with you, be hospitable with you and love you when you were unlovable. Pray that the word of God will lodge the arrow of the gospel deep in their hearts and minds and not let them rest until they have repented and believed in Jesus.

II. The confident heart is thoroughly committed to the word of God (vv. 43-44)

⁴³ *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules.* ⁴⁴ *I will keep your law continually, forever and ever . . ."*

Now he prays, *"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth."* Consider that he just asked that he would have an answer for those who are mocking him but now he seems like he might be at a loss for words.

Have you ever been trying to explain the gospel to someone or talking about Jesus to someone and cannot find the words to say or perhaps the boldness to talk to them? I have. I cannot tell you how many times I have walked away from a conversation and thought, *"I know what I should have said."* I just have to trust that what I did say or if I didn't say was what should have been said or not said.

The idea that God *not take his word out of our mouths* means that the word has been planted deep in his heart. Remember what comes out from the mouth issues from the heart. *Hope that is in God's word* is not simply an issue of the mouth but an issue of the heart. **Then in v. 44** the psalmist says that he *will keep God law continually, forever and ever.* The psalmist desires to continually obey the word from the heart. This is the person who puts feet to his prayers. Not only does he want to say what he means from the heart but he wants to be a person of integrity and do what he says. He wants his words and his actions to match. So if he says he loves God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength and loves his neighbor as himself he wants to make sure he does this continually from the heart.

The Apostle Paul warned against only loving God and other with our lips in 1 Corinthians 13, *"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* ² *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* ³ *If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.* ⁴ *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it*

is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part,¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

God does not care if you are quick with your tongue or a good debater or an eloquent public speaker if you do not love those to whom you are speaking. To begin loving those to whom you are speaking you must begin by genuinely loving Christ and His word yourself.

The whole idea of vv. 43-44 is that to love the word of God means to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself. To be partially committed to the word is to only love the word but NOT the people to whom you speak. If you do not love God and your neighbor from the heart then repent and ask God to change your heart. Cry out to him in prayer.

III. The confident heart courageously talks about Jesus (vv. 45-46)

⁴⁵and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. ⁴⁶I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame,”

We see the progression of the psalmist's prayer in vv. 45-46. As his confidence in God's word grows from the heart then so does his courage and boldness to speak the word of God. The Hebrew word for “wide place” in v. 45 is the same word for “enlarged heart” in v. 32. The idea is that the psalmist's heart has become so filled and so penetrated with the word of God that he lives with great confidence in God's word.

On this side of the cross we look back at how the word of God revealed the coming of Christ and the redemption that Jesus accomplished on the cross. The psalmist's confidence was looking forward to the Messiah but he did not fully understand what that would look like. We understand it from this side of the cross. We look back at how the promises were made and the promises were kept and our confidence in God's grows.

Genuine, vital Christian faith in the Scriptures hangs on two principles: the formal principle and the material principle. The **formal principle** is the principle on which we base everything else. The **formal principle** is the truthfulness and reliability of God's word. In other words, the **formal principle** stands on the fact that God's word is absolute truth and it is completely reliable and sufficient for salvation and godliness. The **material principle** is the substance of what is in the **formal principle**, the word of God. Specifically this is the promise of redemption given by God from creation and that was accomplished in the person and work of Christ and applied to the heart of the sinners by the Spirit of God. We need both the **formal principle** and the **material principle**.

For example, there are groups that have as strong a **formal principle** as we do. The Jehovah's Witnesses have a strong **formal principle**. They believe the Bible is the word of God, that is inerrant and trustworthy, but they have a wrong **material principle**. They misinterpret the Bible and therefore have a flawed **material principle**. They will agree with us on the **formal principle** but we have very different conclusions as to the **material principle**.

Likewise, it is possible to have a good grasp on the **material principle** but leave the **formal principle** behind and so over time the authority of Scripture is no longer correcting the **material principle**. When this happens what you do is drift from the

gospel and begin to focus on anything but the gospel. This is when churches or denominations become liberal or even worse drift off into some cult of some kind.

So in the end, what we really need is the **formal principle**, the authority of the word of God and the **material principle**, a full and correct grasp of the gospel of Jesus Christ.³ **You might be thinking to yourself**, "Well Michael that was a nice exercise in academics but how does this help me speak courageously about Jesus?" Great question, I am glad you asked me.

Let's look at Acts 2-4, Peter preached three sermons in these chapters. When you read his sermons what you realize is that he based his message on the full authority of the word of God spoken of as the promises of God in the Old Testament. Peter recounted Jewish history and showed how Jesus was the Christ so we see that his message was grounded in the **formal principle** and flowing from that was a full grasp of the **material principle**, the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ was the heart of his message of the redemption that is seen in all of Scripture.

So what affect did this have on Peter and John? Listen to **Acts 4:13**, "Now when they [the Sanhedrin] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." When you are confident in the authority of Scripture and have a full grasp of the gospel that stands on the authority of Scripture then the words you share reflect that confidence.

Application: You and I will most likely never stand before Presidents or kings or rulers or any other authority where we will have to give this kind of testimony as **v. 46** says. I hope you get to do that. This would be a glorious thing. God may call you to that.

It happened to the **reformer Martin Luther**. Luther was just an obscure monk in the backwater town of Germany when he gave a witness for Christ. It began with his lectures to his students, writing his books and posting the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door. His confidence in Holy Scripture culminated in him standing before the governmental ruling and religious leaders of the world of his day and they asked him to recant his writings. **Luther responded:** "*Since your most serene majesty and your high mightiness require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear to me as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning—unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted—and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.*"⁴

May the Lord give us all the opportunity to give this kind of witness for Christ **but the truth is** most of us will live ordinary lives that give witness on a day-to-day basis with our spouses, children, extended family, coworkers, and neighbors. For most of us the closest you will come to preaching a sermon like the Apostle Peter will be with your kids or some friend and that is okay. Actually this is very good for you never know whose life you will touch.

My life was changed when an old mechanic named Harvey leaned over the fender of a car to help me work on the motor and in the process he invited me to church. God used that simple word to change my life. Harvey did not let embarrassment or fear paralyze him from giving a simple testimony for Christ and inviting me to church.

³ Don Carson lecture: *Understanding for the Simple (Psalm 119)* at the 2017 Xenos Summer Institute, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kd4bBDKVwpo>.

⁴ James M. Boice, *An Expository Commentary: Psalms 107-150*, Vol. 3, 999.

If fear or shame or embarrassment keeps you from talking about Jesus or inviting others to church then there is heart work to be done. May the Lord give you the faith, hope and love to speak His word at the right time to the right people from the heart.

IV. The confident heart deeply delights in the gospel (vv. 47-48)

"⁴⁷for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. ⁴⁸I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes."

Let me close with vv. 47-48. These two verses are the natural conclusion to the progression of confidence in the word of God. In v. 41, he prayed that God's steadfast love would come to him and by vv. 47-48 we see that it did and in these verses the psalmist said in each verse that he loved God's word. Where our love is, is where our delight is. The psalmist's heart overflows with love for God and His word. He stretches his hands toward heaven in worship as his heart grows in confidence in the word of God.

The progress in growth in feeds worship. The more he meditates on the Word the more he grows and the more he grows in the Word the depth of his love and worship grows. One feeds the other.

May it be said of us that we continually lift up our hands toward the commandments of God which we love because on every page of Scripture we see the love of God in Jesus Christ whom all of the Bible is about and so we meditate on all of the word of God.