

Text: Ps 119.41-48

We are back in Psalm 119 for our communion service today. Our section is headed by the Hebrew letter “vav” (acc. to NAU). I learned it as “waw.” It can have a “v” or “w” sound.

If the letter occurs by itself, it is simply the conjunction “and.”

It often is used to tie one passage to another. In English, we aren’t supposed to run sections together like this, “and ... and ... and ...” but Hebrew doesn’t care.

(This reminds me of my granddaughter who likes to keep the floor in any conversation by saying, “and also” as a sort of period at the end of a sentence so you won’t jump in and start talking.)

This stanza, Ps 119.41-48, starts with “and” in every verse. Of course, our translators smooth that out in English.

Read Ps 119.41-48

There are two requests in this stanza. James Montgomery Boice offered this story in his introduction to his notes for the section:

“Bruce Waltke is professor of Old Testament studies at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, and a former teacher at a number of evangelical schools, including Westminster and Dallas seminaries. He is an outstanding scholar, and he has written a book in which he testifies to the importance of prayer in getting to know God through Bible study.

“He explains that early in his life he used to read the Bible for its academic merit and that he got nothing out of it. Then one day he heard a preacher say it is necessary to ask God for enlightenment. So he began praying, ‘Lord, speak to me through your Word.’ At first his reading seemed much the same, but soon it changed. He writes, ‘Within three weeks of praying that prayer as I read, my heart began to burn within me. I started to see new things in Scripture. God began revealing to me how his Word should change my life. I developed a love for his teaching. God heard my prayer and began to speak to me through his Word.’ [Bruce Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Gresham, Ore.: Vision House, 1995), 89.]

“What Waltke found is what the writer of Psalm 119 tells us in the next three sections of his psalm, namely, that the purpose of Bible study is not to get to know the Bible in some abstract or academic sense, but actually to get to know God. The key is prayerful Bible study.”¹

With that in mind, let’s look at our passage:

I. The prayers of the psalmist

A. The prayer for God’s *chesed* (lovingkindness) (41)

1. The key word in the request is “lovingkindness”
 - a. Many synonyms, love, mercy, kindness
 - b. Doesn’t easily translate into English
 - c. Often referred to as God’s “covenant love”
 - d. Some have made God obligated to “*chesed*” but voluntary love is a key component
2. When used among men, it assumes a relationship grounded in love (or at least hoped for)
 - a. David and Jonathan (1Sa 20.12-15)
 - b. But also of the kind of relationship Abimelech desired with Abraham (Gen 21.22-24)
3. In our passage it finds “salvation” as a parallel
 - a. The psalmist wants a personal relationship with God
 - b. He wants mercy, love, loyalty, freely given
 - c. And this love is salvation

B. The prayer for God’s word (43)

1. The prayer is also a prayer for God’s loyalty
2. Not a prayer that God will speak, but that God will not withdraw his promises

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107-150: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2005), 997.

3. Consequently, the psalmist “waits” – with an expectation

Bruce Waltke’s prayer we mentioned in the introduction is this kind of waiting: “I stand by, waiting for the answer from your word, which I know you will give.”

II. The commitments of the psalmist (of the redeemed)

A. I will have an answer (42)

1. An apologetic purpose:

a. Crave a loving relationship with God

b. So as to preach a faithful answer to those who reproach

2. God’s word (I trust in your word) is a sure answer

a. We will not win souls by a sophisticated argument

b. We need to win souls by proclaiming the Word

B. I will keep your law (44)

1. A permanent commitment

2. A holy lifestyle

C. I will walk at liberty (45)

1. Many look at Christianity as a system of restrictive “do’s and don’ts”

2. Rather, salvation brings liberty: the freedom to do right and glorify God

D. I will speak before kings (46)

“This last verse has often been used by historians to describe Martin Luther’s heroic stand before the Diet of Worms. ...²

When asked to retract his writings, Luther replied:

“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

² Boice, 998.

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.”³

1. No one is guaranteed an opportunity to speak the gospel to kings or emperors
 2. What the psalmist is saying is that he will have courage to speak before whomever God brings him, if God grants his request for covenant loyalty.
- E. I will delight in your commandments (47) and lift up my hands to your commandments (48)
1. The key response of the redeemed is love and loyalty to God’s word
 2. Salvation brings God’s mercy
 3. Salvation results in the believers loyalty

Conclusion:

We often talk about God’s love being shown to us by sending Jesus to die for our sins.

Jn 3.16 ¶ “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.

One commentator said something like this, “The love of God for man was forever settled by the cross.”

God freely offered his love for you.

Now. Freely offer your love to him.

³ From J. H. Merle D’Aubigné, *The Life and Times of Martin Luther*, trans. H. White (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 423–34 in Boice, 999.