

Faith Under Fire: Cultivating Unwavering Loyalty and Unashamed Love (Ps. 119:41-48)

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Our verse-by-verse study through this great Psalm brings us the 6th stanza, vs. 41-48, with heading VAV because each verse begins with the 6th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, pronounced Vav or Waw (if your Bible prints out the Hebrew characters, this letter looks like a little shepherd's staff). In this passage we'll see how:

- the rod and the staff of the Good Shepherd comforts those who know Him as their LORD, through persecution or pain
- and how He leads His sheep to open green pastures
- and how He makes those who trust Him to lay down beside still waters--peace in the midst of danger / fear around them
- and how He restores our soul, through what Ps. 19 speaks of: "the Law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul"
- and how even if we go through the darkest valleys, even if we come in danger of death, even if the kings of this world may be against us -- we will not fear evil, because the King of Kings is with us -- He will give us the words to say and strength for whatever shadows and darkness lies ahead
- this stanza was certainly written while the writer was in the presence of enemies, but we see his cup overflowed with the delight and love for God and His Word that pours forth
- in our text he pledges unwavering loyalty and unashamed love and obedience, but it is only because he has prayed for and is confident in God's lovingkindness or goodness and mercy following every day of his life, and salvation's promise of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

⁴¹ May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word; ⁴² So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word. ⁴³ And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I wait for Your ordinances. ⁴⁴ So I will keep Your law continually, Forever and ever. ⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts. ⁴⁶ I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings And shall not be ashamed. ⁴⁷ I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. ⁴⁸ And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.

Steve Lawson summarizes this passage as reminding us:

'that the Christian life is not lived aboard a cruise liner, boarded by sight-seers vacationing in leisure. [We should instead think of] a battleship, armed by soldiers of the cross. And the promises of God are weapons for our warfare, equipping us for victory against the many enemies of our soul that we face. The Christian life is lived in a context of spiritual warfare, and soul-searching conflict, and any other perspective of the Christian life would not be true to the Word of God. The fact of the matter is we sail through stormy seas, and storm clouds of opposition threaten us, and tides of temptation pull us toward hidden reefs of sin, and waves of adversity batter the hull of our faith, and winds of opposition shred our sails. All is not smooth sailing in the Christian life - even for the most mature believer – *especially* for the most mature believer.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far And grace will lead me home

Amazing grace will transport us to glory, but it will be through bloody seas that we travel. This is certainly the atmosphere of Psalm 119. It is written by a man who is being besieged for his faith in the Lord ... besieged for his commitment to the Word of God. He is being assaulted for his faith. He is not sitting in an air-conditioned library while he is studying the Word of God while all is quiet and serene ... rather he finds himself as he writes this psalm in the midst of tribulation, and in the midst of persecution, and in the midst of conflict.’¹

In vs. 42-46 we see his unwavering loyalty to God and His Word:

⁴² So **I will** have an answer for him who reproaches me, For **I trust** in Your word ... ⁴⁴ So **I will keep Your law continually**, Forever and ever. ⁴⁵ And **I will walk** at liberty, For **I seek Your precepts**. ⁴⁶ **I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings** ...

“I will” he says several times (“I will” or “I shall” 8x in 8 verses), I will be loyal to God no matter the pressure, no matter the price.

His faith being under fire also did not diminish his unashamed love

⁴⁶ I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings **And shall not be ashamed**. ⁴⁷ **I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love**. ⁴⁸ And **I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love**; And I will **meditate** on Your statutes.

When our faith is under fire, how can we cultivate the same unwavering loyalty and unashamed love for God and His Word?

1. Praying in faith for grace-enabled boldness (v. 41-43)

The prayer in verse 41 is the only way the rest of this passage could be possible. He is praying in faith in God’s Word as the end of v. 41 says “according to Your Word” or “Your promise” (NASB margin, NIV, ESV) or “*as You promised*” (HCSB, NET). The term here in the original language emphasizes a specific promise from God. It is very biblical to pray in line with God’s promises.

The end of v. 42 says “for I trust in Your word”

The end of v. 43 says “for I wait for Your commandments”

Both terms communicate faith in Scripture. Your translation may have the word “hope” in v. 43, but the English word “hope” often means a wish, dream, or desire, so “wait” is probably better. In OT language, this *hope* is not what we would like to happen but what we believe and trust *will* happen. The word means “confident expectation, trust, and patient waiting.” The NT equivalent of this word has the idea of “to expect with desire.” In the OT & NT, hope communicates certainty (not uncertainty like in English) and an attitude of absolute assurance and rest or trust in that assurance.

His faith is in Scripture despite the reproaches of the enemy in v. 42, the taunting opposition or criticism aimed against those who trust in Scripture. To answer unbelievers, the believer's faith is not in his own words, but in God's Words. He prays in faith that God will not let him answer apart from God's truth --v. 43: "*do not take the word utterly out of my mouth*" (because of fear or whatever it might be that causes us to not speak God's Word when we're out in the world). We may have a great fear of speaking God's Word in public ... but it seems this psalmist's great fear is that he would *not* speak God's truth, so he prays his mouth will never stop speaking God's truth, no matter the situation, no matter the cost. *We're afraid of speaking God's truth in the slightest persecution; the godly man's fear is not speaking God's truth even in the greatest persecution! The godly fear God's disapproval, not man's.*

He prays in faith that as God answers the prayer of v. 41, the reason or result in v. 42 is "So I will have an answer" or in other translations "*then* I will answer" (NIV, ESV, HCSB, NET).

We are to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks, Peter wrote (1 Pet 3:15), any / all unbelievers. Some will engage us like v. 42, reproaching or challenging our faith. How are we to answer opposition to God's truth? How else but *with* God's truth itself?

Ephesians 6:17 reminds us the only weapon we have is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, applied prayerfully and carefully. Anything outside this book and not true to this book will not be living and powerful and sharper than any 2-edged sword, but everything God says is. How do we answer unbelievers? Not with the *arguments of men*, but with the *announcement of Truth*.

The power is not sharing "this is what I think" – but "Thus says the Lord," a phrase we see in Scripture over 400x. Even with the devil himself, our Lord's example was "It is written" (*God's Word says*). If God said it, that settles it.

Charles Bridges wrote: 'there is a far heavier *reproach* than that of the world—when the grand accuser [Satan] injects hard thoughts of God—when he throws our guilt and unworthiness—our helplessness and difficulties, in our face ... Most important, therefore, is it for us to pray for a realizing sense of *the Lord's mercies—even of his salvation* [as v. 41 prays] —not only as necessary for our peace and comfort—but to garrison us against every assault, and to enable us to throw down the challenge—"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Mic 7:8.) Free grace has saved me—an unspotted righteousness covers me—an Almighty arm sustains me—eternal glory awaits me. Who shall condemn? "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" (Rom. 8:33-39).'²

This psalm prays for grace-enabled boldness to believe and to speak God's truth

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Our spiritual boldness will be hindered by our spiritual coldness or lack of prayer.

The Jewish believers in the early church, the first time they encountered persecution and opposition, seemed to be quite familiar with this psalm, and praying very much in line with it.

In Acts 4, God was working wonders and great numbers were turning to Christ and the disciples were speaking the Word of God all around Jerusalem, calling for repentance and trust in Christ. The authorities throw them in jail and command them to speak in the name of Jesus no more.

They get out of jail and the disciples then gather and pray, not to escape their persecution, but for grace to be bold and faithful *in persecution*. They weren't praying God to grant increased comfort, but increased confidence.

²⁹ “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and **grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence** [or “boldness” NKJV] ...

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began to speak the word of God with boldness ...*

³³ And **with great power the apostles were giving testimony** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace was upon them all.**

We need great grace to speak God's Word with great boldness and power, so Psalm 119:41 begins our passage praying for grace-enablement. God's grace saves us from eternal suffering but not from earthly suffering. Jesus even promised “in this world you will have trouble.” Some of that trouble like in Ps 119 is in fact *because* we follow the Lord. Our prayers should not be for a trouble-free life, but for grace to speak and live God's truth in our troubles. Grace often helps us *through* (rather than taking us *out of*) trials.

Look at v. 41 and how this whole stanza starts – in need of God's grace or lovingkindness to come first, so that we can then love and be loyal to the Lord as we should. That's the focus of this prayer.

By comparison, when you're in difficulty, how often do you focus on / dwell on self and things that cannot give you relief, rather than selflessly praying to the God of all grace and comfort? How much time do we spend complaining rather than pleading with God to visit us with His mercies, His lovingkindness, His grace?

“Lovingkindness” in v. 41 (NASB) is the rich Hebrew word *hesed*. In the ESV it is translated “steadfast love” or in other translations “unfailing love” (NIV) or “mercies” (NKJV) or “faithful love” (HCSB) or “loyal love” (NET), the Lord's covenant love or mercy.

In this verse it's not just mercy, but plural *mercies*, the plural perhaps emphasizing God's manifold or abundant multifaceted and undeserved and unearned graciousnesses toward us. This prayer reminds us we're not to wallow in focusing on the humans around us who are unfaithful and unmerciful, who have wronged us or failed us; we are to look to the unfailing, always faithful, steadfast, marvelously merciful, loyal lovingkindness of our covenant LORD

Verse 41 also prays for “salvation” - a word that is elsewhere translated as deliverance, victory, or safety. The word is often used in the context of military conflict (Judg. 15:18; 1 Sam. 11:13; 1 Chron. 11:14). Salvation or deliverance, whether physical or spiritual, is not by man's strength, but by *God's sufficiency*.

Psalm 33:16-18 (NASB95) ¹⁶ The king is **not saved by a mighty army**; A warrior is **not delivered by great strength**. ¹⁷ A horse is a false hope for **victory** [same Heb. Word translated “salvation” in Ps 119:41]; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. ¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, **On those who hope for His lovingkindness**.

Spurgeon said the writer of Psalm 119 was not content with *chapter and verse* of Scripture, he wanted *mercies and salvation*.

He desires mercy as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant. He needed much mercy and varied mercy, hence the request is in the plural ... Salvation is an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance. To the God of our mercies be glory, world without end.³

There's a 2nd way this passage models for cultivating loyalty and love for God's Word:
#2 Obeying Continually God's Law of Liberty (v. 44-45)

⁴⁴ So I will keep Your law continually, Forever and ever.

⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.

In verse 44, it would have been enough to say he will keep or obey God's law continually, but he also adds “forever and ever” – 3 different Hebrew words together meaning “always, eternally, and forever.” In other words, his obedience is not temporary but is going to go on and on, not only in this life but in the next as well.

Revelation 22:1-3 (NASB95) ¹ Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and **His bond-servants [slaves] will serve Him**;

Heaven is not sitting on clouds doing nothing, strumming a harp. Heaven is not portrayed as a place of eternal golf (sorry, golfers), or “a big, big house where we can play football,” or whatever your favorite thing is multiplied by 10 – never-ending chocolate cake or eternal doing of whatever we think is most fun in this life, doing our own thing. Scripture presents a glorious place that far exceeds our imagination, where God will be the focus, to God will be the glory, and we will have the incredible privilege as saints saved by His grace, to serve Him for all eternity as His redeemed slaves, chosen and rescued from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His glorious Son who we'll serve through eternity!

We will have the privilege of obeying and serving our Master. And for the first time we will be able to serve Him in fullest and unending joy and delight because we will be free from the sin that so easily entangles and messes with the purity of our hearts in our love for the Lord. God's law was not just for the OT dispensation, from age to age, and to all eternity, we will serve and obey God.

⁴⁵ **And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.**

ESV “I shall walk in a wide space” – wide in the sense that there's nothing to check or hinder freedom of action. One translation has “I will walk freely in an open space” (HCSB)

God's law is not a harsh restrictive source of bondage, in fact the book of James twice refers to it as "the law of liberty"

James 1:25 (NASB95)²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

How are we to use the freedom or liberty given by God's Word in the gospel? Not do our own thing for ourselves, we are *freed from self, freed from our sin*, so that we can be all that God desires us to be – loving Him and living for Him, which our formerly sin-enslaved hearts were unable to do until freed from sin's bondage.

Galatians 5:13 (NASB95)¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

1 Peter 2:16 (NASB95)¹⁶ *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it as* bondslaves of God.

John 8:31-36 (NASB95)³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'"³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.³⁵ "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever."³⁶ "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

So many people want to be free from God's law, but the paradox is that God's Word is actually the source of freedom. Apart from obeying Christ's commands, we are all slaves of sin. So the liberty in verse 45 is 'not the liberty of sin—to do what we please—but of holiness—to do what we ought; the one, the iron bondage of our own will; the other, the easy yoke of a God of love.'⁴

1 John 5:3 (NASB95)³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

'The remarkable *Journal* of David Brainerd, who died in 1747, at the early age of 29, is permeated with the power of the Psalms on which are based, "five distinguishing marks of a *true Christian*." The fifth of these marks, wrote Brainerd, was having the laws of God as his delight in which he said, "The strict observance of them is not his bondage, but his greatest liberty. *I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy commandments.*"

...

[There's a hymn by] George Matheson ... on the paradox of spiritual bondage and yet liberty –
Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free
Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conqueror be

[The only truly free man is] whom the truth sets free, and all are slaves beside. It is only as we, like David, observe God's law in the heart, in the mind, and in the actions, that we ... walk in the ... large place of love and liberty. If we sincerely seek God's precepts, we are not free to do as we like, but only as He likes. We cannot freely move, until He has wrought our chains. If we would reach the [King's] throne, we must resign our crown.'⁵

There's a 3rd way to cultivate loyalty and love for God in His Word:
#3 Saying God's Truth Fully and Fearlessly (v. 46)

It is one thing to say God's truth in an interactive Bible study or with Christian friends who agree with those truths in a friendly environment, but we truly grow when we cultivate the habit of speaking God's truth in less friendly environments and to those who are not Christians. Our culture thinks of faith as something personal and private, but that's not the biblical faith of this psalm

⁴⁶ I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings And shall not be ashamed.

This verse in the grammar (and through v. 48) is really a result or consequence of the answered prayer from earlier in this passage (v. 43). He has already prayed that God would not allow the Word of God to be absent from his lips, because if he was ashamed to speak of His Lord, His Lord would be shamed by him.

Mark 8:38 (NASB95) ³⁸ "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Proverbs 29:25 says "the fear of man is a snare." We don't have half as much to fear as the original biblical readers did for confessing the Lord. Their commitment to God's Word might mean them being killed – all most of us might lose is a little comfort or coolness in the eyes of the world. When we speak of the Lord to the average person, we may risk our being *liked* a little, but this writer was willing to risk *his life* before the kings themselves!

Psalms 138:3-4 (NASB95) ³ On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul. ⁴ All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth.

The psalmist is not concerned about his own reputation, but he does want to lift up God's reputation and to tell the powers-that-be that God alone is to be praised.

How will we weak people be able to give testimony before kings?

Matthew 10:18-39 (NASB95) ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and **kings** for My sake, **as a testimony** to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ "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. ²⁰ "For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you ... ²² "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved ... ²⁶ "Therefore **do not fear them**, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ "What I tell you in the darkness, **speak in the light**; and what you hear *whispered* in *your* ear, **proclaim upon the housetops**. ²⁸ "**Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**. ²⁹ "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ "So **do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows**. ³² "Therefore **everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father** who is in heaven. ³³ "**But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father** who is in heaven.

Those are sobering words, but they're not mine, they're Christ's. If the *pattern of your life* denies the Lord, it also denies the reality of your professed love of the Lord and your supposed relationship. I would encourage you to read the end of Matthew 7 (many who merely say Lord, Lord, and many who build on wrong foundation, who think they're going to heaven, but aren't).

^{10:37}“He who loves father or mother **more than Me** is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

At the end of Matthew 11 Jesus invites to salvation-rest all sinners who know they fall short and who are weary of their sin and works and need rest for their souls. If you have never fully understood Christ’s gospel, today is the day

Steve Camp’s song “Consider the Cost” sums up Christ’s call well:

*There’s a way that seems right to you, but in the end it leads only to death
Come unto Him all ye weary, come and find your rest*

*Many will say "Lord, Lord" on that day "Look what we have done in your name
We have prophesied and preformed many miracles
And Lord, even the demons obey"
And He will declare unto them the most terrifying words of truth
He'll say "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I have never known you"*

*Oh foolish man, how you build on the sand trusting in your goodness to save
For when the rains fall, and the flood breaks the wall you will be swept away
But blessed is he who builds on the rock who takes Jesus as Lord to save
For when the rain falls, he will endure it all Standing firm in His grace*

*Consider the Cost of building a tower, It’s a narrow way that you must come
For to do the will of the father is to follow the Son
To love Him more than father or mother, To love Him more than even your own Flesh
To give all that you are, for all that He is, This is the gospel according to Jesus*

That may be a little different than the gospel according to some, or according to how you understood it before as a superficial “accepting” of Jesus, or just repeating the words of a formula prayer at some point in the past ... but Christ defines Christians.

If He is not truly your Lord who you love today, the red letters from Christ in Mark 1:15 are “Repent and believe the gospel.” Turn from your sin, trust in Christ alone, and follow Him as Master. The words Jesus used more than any other were “follow me.” In the words of Philippians 2, bow your knee and let your tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD. Confess you are a great sinner in need of a great Savior and you can pray like our verse in Ps. 119:41 “Let your mercies come unto me, even Your salvation”

When we have truly prayed as the verses of this psalm have prayed up until this point, God will enable His true children to speak His Word unashamedly before anyone, no matter the cost.

No king or earthly authority should cause us to fear if we have the King of the Universe living inside us! Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world! Earthly kings are *nothing* next to the King of Kings!

Daniel 3:16-18 (NASB95) ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷“If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸“But *even* if *He* does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

They were saying basically, we will not worship or bow to your gods – you must worship and bow down before the One True God.

The Bible is full of examples of Psalm 119:46, men who spoke God’s truth before kings and authorities and were not ashamed.

- Moses and Aaron declared God’s Word to the King of Egypt.
- Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes or Esther in Persia
- Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26) even desiring to see Caesar
- King Herod was feared by many people in his land, but he greatly feared John the Baptist who was fearless in speaking God’s truth. Even after John was dead, Herod kept fearing that he might rise again.

Mark 6:18-20 (NASB95) ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

It reminds me of John Knox, the courageous preacher most used by God in bringing the Reformation to Scotland. Although he called out sin and spoke out against Mary Queen of Scots, she often had him preach before her, and history records several famous occasions where He preached God’s truth boldly to her in her chapel in the presence of others. Mary was once quoted as saying she feared the preaching of John Knox more than the armies of Europe!

Knox was a man of backbone who preached powerfully and politically incorrectly against the idolatry of the Catholic Church, i.e., Mass, saint worship, pope, etc., and urged people to turn to the truth of the gospel, resulting in the conversion of many and eventually the Scottish Parliament declared the Mass to be illegal.

When Queen Mary came to power, great persecution of the Protestants resumed. Knox like many other faithful fearless preachers, was eventually martyred. S. M. Houghton writes, “He was burned in Edinburgh, the Regent of Scotland speaking over his grave the long remembered words, ‘Here lies one who never feared the face of man.’”⁶

As one of the Reformers wrote, this verse ‘shows that the children of God should not permit their Father’s glory to be obscured by the vain pomp of princes [or any human rulers, or any human beings for that matter].’ (*Geneva Bible Notes*)

Psalm 119:46 in the Latin was used as the motto for Lutheran Church confession in Germany. Luther himself ‘was not only a man of great belief, but also great boldness in standing out against the highest in the land. When the Emperor [!] sent for Luther at Worms, and his friends tried hard to prevent him from going, he said, “Go, I will surely go, since I am sent for, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; yea, though I knew that there were as many devils in Worms to resist me as there be tiles to cover the houses, yet I would go.”’⁷

As he wrote in his famous hymn, A Mighty Fortress is our God:

“And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.”

Paul said: *I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16)

2 Timothy 1 (NKJV) ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of **fear**, but of **power** and of love and of a sound mind. ⁸ Therefore **do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord**, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God ... ¹² For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless **I am not ashamed**, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. ¹³ **Hold fast** the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

May God help us to hold fast His truth courageously, unashamedly.

When our faith is under fire, we can cultivate unwavering loyalty, lastly by:

#4 Displaying True Delight and Love of God in His Word (v. 47-48)

v. 47 “I will delight myself in Your commandments” (NKJV); or ESV “I find my delight in Your commandments”

This is where I am to find my delight, not in the fleeting pleasures of the world, but in the true pure pleasures of God and His Word.

It’s a reflexive verb, something you make *yourself* delight in, like Psalm 37:4 commands “Delight *yourself* in the LORD”

We’ve seen the word “delight” in Psalm 119 before but this is the first time we see the word “love.” That word for love we’ll see 10 more times in this psalm, a word meaning “a strong emotional attachment to and desire either to possess or to be in the presence of the object.” Like Abraham who loved Isaac (Gen. 22:2), Isaac loved Rebekah (24:67), Jacob loved Joseph “more than all his children” (37:3), and Ruth loved her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 4:15). In every case, biblical love is not mere feelings or something invisible and mystical, it is always *displayed* by loving actions. Using the same word, God commands men to love Him and here we are to love the Word, i.e., desire to be with God and His Word.

He repeats the word “love” in verse 48 and says: “I will lift up your hands to my commandments which I love”

Again this a *displaying* of his delight and love for Scripture. It’s as if he’s stretching out both arms to embrace the Word he loves, and he needs both hands to make sure he won’t let go of it.

This phrase has been called ‘a bold expression of yearning for God’s revelation in Scripture’⁸ or in other words, ‘the longing desire expressed by stretching out the hands after the commandments, often parallel to the lifting up of the heart to the highest good (Ps 28:2, 63:5, Lam. 3:41).’⁹

Lifting the hands often accompanied passionate prayer or praise

1 Tim 2:8 I want the men in every place to pray, **lifting up holy hands**

Psalm 28:2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When **I lift up my hands** toward Your holy sanctuary.

Psalm 63:4 So I will bless You as long as I live; **I will lift up my hands in Your name.**

Psalm 134:2 **Lift up your hands to the sanctuary** And bless the Lord.

Psalm 141:2 May my prayer be counted as incense before You; **The lifting up of my hands** as the evening offering.

143:6 **I stretch out my hands to You**; My soul *longs* for You, as a parched land

This prayer and praise in Ps. 119 is in honor of the Word of God

Nehemiah 8:5-6 (NASB95) ⁵ Ezra opened **the book** in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, **all the people stood up.** ⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD **the great God.** And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" **while lifting up their hands**; then **they bowed low and worshiped the LORD** with *their* faces to the ground.

There's nothing wrong with raising of the hands in praise, as long as you're not drawing attention to yourself like the Pharisees did when they prayed or worshipped trying to look spiritual to others. It's very biblical to be lifted up at times in praise, even physically expressive with our whole person in our delight and love for God and longing for His Word

And it's also very biblical at times to be down low, even physically bowing in worship with our face to the ground. Both depths of reverence and heights of rejoicing. We should be unashamed in our love and not so restrained in our emotions and affections for God.

This psalm models beautifully for us both unashamed love and unwavering loyalty and how to cultivate it, even when faith is under fire: in what we're praying, obeying, saying, and displaying.

Bridges: 'We are too often content with a scanty measure of love: without any sensible "hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" neither able to pray with life and power, nor to hear with comfort and profit ... nor to meditate with spiritual delight, nor to live for God with zeal and interest, nor to anticipate the endurance of the cross with unflinching resolution—the soul being equally disabled for heavenly communion and active devotedness. Shall we look for ease under the power of this deadening malady? Let us rather struggle and cry for deliverance from it. Let us subscribe ourselves before God as wretched, helpless, and guilty. He can look upon us, and revive us. Let us then "take hold upon his covenant," and plead that he will look upon us. Let us "put him in remembrance" of the glory of his name, which is much more concerned in delivering us out of this frame, by his quickening grace, than in leaving us ...

Professor! awake: or beg of the Lord to awaken you! For if your cold sleeping heart is contented with the prospect of a heaven hereafter, without seeking for a present foretaste of its joy, it may be a very questionable matter whether heaven will ever be yours ...

Come then, Christian, let us set our hearts to a vigorous, delighting devotedness to the statutes of our God. "It is not a vain thing for us; because it is our life." (Deut 32:46-47.) But to regard some of the words *only* would be to obey our own will, not God's. Let us lift up our hands to them all ... let us employ our active meditation in searching for the mine that lies not on the surface, but which never fails to enrich diligent, patient, persevering labour (Prov 2:4-5.)¹⁰

¹ Steve Lawson, “The High Cost of Deep Loyalty to God’s Word” www.cfbcmobile.org, preached 5/29/2005.

² Charles Bridges, *Psalms 119*, Banner of Truth Trust, p. 104-5.

³ Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, 3:226.

⁴ Bridges, p. 111.

⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *A Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*, 552

⁶ S. M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, 129.

⁷ Lockyer, 552.

⁸ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Tyndale OT Commentary series, p. 425.

⁹ *Lange’s Commentary*, 5:590.

¹⁰ Bridges, 119-21.