

**"What Assurance Produces"  
(Psalm 119:41-48)  
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**(Psalm 119:41-48)**

<sup>41</sup> May your unfailing love come to me, Lord,  
                    your salvation, according to your promise;  
<sup>42</sup> then I can answer anyone who taunts me,  
                    for I trust in your word.  
<sup>43</sup> Never take your word of truth from my mouth,  
                    for I have put my hope in your laws.  
<sup>44</sup> I will always obey your law,  
                    for ever and ever.  
<sup>45</sup> I will walk about in freedom,  
                    for I have sought out your precepts.  
<sup>46</sup> I will speak of your statutes before kings  
                    and will not be put to shame,  
<sup>47</sup> for I delight in your commands  
                    because I love them.  
<sup>48</sup> I reach out for your commands, which I love,  
                    that I may meditate on your decrees.

If we read through this passage a few times we'll notice that everything in this section hinges upon the first verse. Therefore, in order to understand verses 42-48, we have to understand what verse 41 is all about. Look with me at verse 41 again:

May your unfailing love come to me, Lord,  
                    your salvation, according to your promise;

The verse appears to be written in such a way that the first line and the second line are saying essentially the same thing. Look again at the first line. It says, "May your unfailing love come to me, Lord." Then, for the second line we could supply a couple words like 'may' and the verb "come to me" and so it would read like this, "May your salvation come to me according to your promise." Put these two lines together and it would go like this:

May your unfailing love come to me, Lord,  
May your salvation come to me, according to your promise.

I'm pretty confident that that is how we are to read that verse. So the second line repeats the thought of the first line, but also adds something to it. That means that the words 'unfailing love' and 'salvation' are to be understood synonymously, or at least as one describing the other. In other words, God's unfailing love is best seen in his salvation. And when God saves, it is an expression of His unfailing love.

Now that we understand the structure of verse one, let's look at the meaning. There are three words that we need to pay attention to in order to get the most out of this verse. They are the words, "unfailing love, salvation, and promise."

'Unfailing love' comes from the Hebrew word '*hesed*,' which is a very common word (298xs) and a word very rich in meaning. It's a word that implies a strong relationship between two parties, a relationship that's based on a prior commitment or bond, especially when God initiates that relationship with humanity. It's a relationship that expects a response. Even though God initiates it, we are expected to reciprocate our love back to Him. It's very similar to the verse in 1 John 4:19. "We love because he first loved us."

So, how is this divine love played out in the Scriptures? Well one of the ways God shows his *hesed*, his divine love to his people is by saving them from disaster or oppressors. You need only to look to the book of Psalms to get that sense.

Praise be to the Lord, for he showed me the wonders of his love when I was in a city under siege. (**Psalm 31:21**)

As well, *hesed* is used of the love that sustains life. With death always being at hand, it's God's divine *hesed* that preserves and sustains our lives.

God's divine love counteracts God's divine wrath. Now that sounds a bit strange and it may take a while to understand, but the Bible teaches that because of God's holiness, he acts in righteous anger or wrath toward sin and sinful people and toward injustice. It's his just response to human rebellion. But when we look at the attributes of God, he is not merely a God of wrath. He is also a God of love. It's his love that holds back his wrath. Again this is not as strange as we might think. We know that parenting is one of the most difficult things on the planet to do. And when our children disobey there is sense of anger and wrath that wells up inside of us. If we always acted out in wrath, we'd be terrible parents; our kid's emotions would be ruined, and we might even land ourselves in jail. What is that wrath counteracted by? It's our *love* for our child. If we, in our imperfect, parental way, can show both wrath and love and even limit our wrath because of our love, how much more can God, who is perfect in holiness, perfect in righteousness and perfect in love do the same. Here's how one author explains it, very beautifully, I might add. "Wrath is a true word, a right word, sometimes an inevitable word. But God would not have it be his last word. That honor is reserved for his unfailing love (*hesed*)" (Vangemeren, 214).

Also, God's divine *hesed* is enduring, persistent and eternal. Listen to Isaiah 54:10:

Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

God's love is the basis or motive for sinners approaching him with their requests. Perhaps the most famous is that of Moses interceding for the people of Israel. Listen to how he prays as he asks God to forgive them.

<sup>18</sup> "The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.' <sup>19</sup> In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." (**Num 14:18–19 NIV11-GK**)

There's more to say, but I will stop here. This is what God's love, his *hesed* is like. The psalmist is asking God. "May your *hesed* come to me."

Then, in the next line he says, "May your salvation come to me according to your promise." You can imagine how many times the word salvation or save appears in the Old Testament. Well, almost 40% of the occurrences are found in the Psalms. And nearly one-half of all the psalms contain at least one use of the word 'salvation.' We can say that one of the major themes of Israel's songbook is about God's salvation, which naturally is the same with Christians and our music today.

Now, in the Old Testament the use of the word salvation is most often used in the context of saving from a calamity or enemy, rather than salvation of our souls from sin, or salvation from judgment or hell, or salvation that brings us to heaven. Not always, but most of the time.

However, even though that's the primary Old Testament usage, it does mean more than just physical deliverance. Here's how we know that. The primary, go-to example of deliverance in the Old Testament is which event? The Exodus. God saved them from slavery. God delivered them from bondage. He rescued them from enemies. And how did he save them? By blood. If you and your family were under the blood of the lamb that was slain, then you were saved. As well, why were they saved, for what reason? Why did Moses ask Pharaoh to release them? That they may worship God.

And, when they finally crossed the Red Sea and camped at Sinai, what do we see? Exodus 19 tells us that God saved them so that they would be his people and he would be their God and that they would live in obedience to him. The Exodus, though it was a physical deliverance is full of spiritual inferences. Were they set free just to be free? No, they were set free so they could be the people of God. They were set free so they would know how to know God, and relate to God, and love God and obey God, and have their sins forgiven by God. These are all very spiritual things. All this to show you that though the idea of salvation in the Old Testament seems to refer primarily to a physical deliverance, it is filled with inferences to spiritual realities. And, those spiritual realities are made crystal clear when we come to the New Testament. In fact the shift seems to be so dramatic that the saving from physical dangers seems almost negligible when compared to the salvation of our souls.

And then finally, the word for 'promise' can mean a few things like "word or promise." If the context shows that the writer is expecting something from God, it's often translated as 'promise.'

Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. (**Psalm 119:140 NIV11-GK**)

Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise. (**Psalm 119:154 NIV11-GK**)

God's promises to his people will never be broken. They will forever remain reliable and dependable. They will always apply to his people.

Okay, so here's what we have so far. The psalmist is asking for God's *hesed*, his unfailing love, to come to him, to be shown to him, to be revealed to him, and to be experienced by him. And the specific expression of that love is in salvation, not merely from physical dangers, but ultimately a spiritual and everlasting salvation. And he has a great confidence in God's love and salvation because they are based upon God's irrefutable, unbreakable promises.

This is what we Christians call assurance. Or the assurance of salvation. The New Testament is filled with verses that address this idea of assurance. Let me give you a few:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. (**John 6:39**)

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.” (**John 6:44**)

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. (**John 6:51**)

<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (**1 John 5:11–13**)

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. (**Rom 8:16**)

God wants us to have this unshakable assurance, but we all, from time to time lack assurance. Our assurance can grow stronger in some seasons and weaker in other seasons, for various reasons. *For example, a few months before my father passed away I was talking to him on the phone and he shared with me a dream that he had. He said that there was this white sheet of paper and on it was his name. That was it. So he asked me, what do you think it means? He was a bit concerned. Even as a follower of Jesus for his entire life, as death was drawing near, this dream was unsettling to him. Well, I thought about it for a while and with my very limited dream interpretation skills I told him. “Well dad, the sheet of paper was white and not black. I think that’s a good thing. And on the sheet of paper your name was written. It’s not as if the sheet was blank. Or, that other names were there and yours was not.” So I said to him, “Dad, you’ve trusted in the Lord your whole life, you’ve confessed your sin and received Christ as Savior. I think your dream is a confirmation to encourage you.”* All of us can lack assurance from time to time.

I don’t have time to explain all the reasons for lacking assurance, however, we can all agree that we should all grow in our assurance, rather than fade in our assurance. Don’t you agree? As time goes on, as we walk more, and longer with the Lord, we should be more confident, more assured that we are God’s children, that we are saved, and that our sins are forgiven and that when we die, we will be in heaven. That’s the assurance that God’s *hesed*, expressed in God’s salvation, based on his unbreakable promise, gives us. We all need that assurance.

Now, what should that unshakeable assurance produce in us? What should be the results of assurance? What does a life that has this kind of assurance look like? These questions are so important because not only do we want our lives to matter, but more than that, God wants our lives to matter. Let’s put it like this. Putting aside individual personalities and temperaments, extroverts and introverts, outgoing or quiet, happy-go-lucky vs. melancholy; putting those things aside, I think this statement is generally true. People who have great convictions, based on great truths live great lives. Let me read it again. People who have great convictions, based on great truths live great lives. Wouldn’t you agree that this is true? If we were to expand on this a bit more it’s to say, “The way you live your life reveals what you truly believe.” Or “What you believe and how strongly you believe it, will determine the kind of life that you live.” I think these statements are true for all people, but especially, especially for Christians, because our entire faith is based on truth statements. Now, we all have access to the same statements, the same truths, the same Gospel, the same promises of God, but why is it that some live out greater lives than others? It’s conviction. How badly do you believe what you believe?

This is what the rest of this section describes:

The first thing it produces is **Great boldness** (42-43, 46)

- <sup>42</sup> then I can answer anyone who taunts me,  
for I trust in your word.  
<sup>43</sup> Never take your word of truth from my mouth,  
for I have put my hope in your laws.  
<sup>46</sup> I will speak of your statutes before kings  
and will not be put to shame,

Verses 42 and 43 go together. In 42 he says I can answer anyone who taunts me and in verse 43 he says, Never take your word from my mouth. And then, in verse 43 he says that he will speak before kings.

What we get a picture of is great boldness and courage that come from his assurance of salvation. All of us could use a fresh jolt of boldness. Probably all of us find ourselves too timid when it comes to our faith. Why is that?

I don't know if you've ever played out imaginary scenarios in your head. For example, when those 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians were beheaded by ISIL in 2015. They were kidnapped, blindfolded, they were forced to kneel on the sand on a beach, and told to recant their faith in Jesus. They didn't and all of them were executed. So I asked myself, "Peter what would you do? Would you recant? Or would you go to your death?" So I played out that scenario in my head. What would I do? Honestly, I don't know if I would possess that kind of courage. I know that only by the strength and grace of God would I be able to remain faithful to my Lord and face my death with courage, knowing I would soon be with my Savior in glory. But what would give me the fortitude to receive that blade? Conviction in the truths and promises of God.

**Strong resolve to know and obey God's word** (44, 48)

- <sup>44</sup> I will always obey your law,  
for ever and ever.  
<sup>48</sup> I reach out for your commands, which I love,  
that I may meditate on your decrees.

How's your obedience to God and your love for obedience? What grade would you give yourself? If our desire for obedience is weak, it is a reflection that our love for the Gospel is weak, that our love for Jesus is weak, and that our confidence in our assurance is weak. Knowing that we've been saved by divine grace and not by our own merit; and understanding that the holy one, the only Son of God bore our sins on the cross, that is the only truth that will turn both rebel and legalist, into a son and daughter, that desires only to please their heavenly father.

Another result of our assurance is that we have **Great Freedom in the Lord** (45)

- <sup>45</sup> I will walk about in freedom,  
for I have sought out your precepts.

The word for freedom here literally means wide, open spaces. When God saves us he delivers us from confinement and the entrapment that comes from sin. He brings us out to wide open spaces, by renewing our hearts, by forgiving our sins, and by giving us the assurance that we are saved, that he is forever watching over us. Contrary to popular opinion, God's precepts, his laws, his Gospel are meant to give us great freedom, not restrictions.

Finally, the assurance that God gives changes our hearts that we begin to **Delight in God's commands** (47-48)

- <sup>47</sup> for I delight in your commands  
because I love them.
- <sup>48</sup> I reach out for your commands, which I love,  
that I may meditate on your decrees.

We cannot delight in what we do not love. We cannot go after, reach out for something we don't love either. People of God, do you love the Word of God? That's one of the fruits, the signs that you are a Christian. You cannot say you love God and then at the same time, not love the Word of God. Because all that we know about God comes from his Word. All that we know about who he is and what he has done, all of attributes, all of his ways with sinners, all that he requires of us, the things we can do to please him, all of that comes from the Word of God. Thus we cannot say we love God and not love the Word of God.

What does assurance produce? Assurance results in great boldness, a strong resolve to obey God's word, great freedom in the Lord, and delight for the word of God. If we lack these things, then we must go back and look at our assurance. Are you a Christian? Have you repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ. Do you understand what you were saved from? Do you know that you deserved the full measure of the holy wrath of God? Do you know that you belonged in hell for all eternity? Do you know that that is what you were saved from? Do you know who it was that rescued you from that? Do you know that it was the sinless, perfect, Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was God from the beginning, but then became a man, and as a man, he went to the cross and died there, bearing the penalty and wrath of God that was meant for you?

Have you repented of your sins? Have you forsaken all of your own merit with which you thought you could earn favor with God? Have you trusted fully and solely upon Jesus? This is the Gospel. Has it sunk it? Have you thrown your entire life upon that very Gospel? Then you have assurance. Ask God for that assurance to grow. Continue to remind yourself daily of the Gospel. And only then will we begin to bear the results, the fruits of assurance.

Let's pray.