

Be Ready To Give An Answer

Psalm 119:41-48

Introduction: 1) Paul Little (12.30.28 -7.11.75) was a wonderful Christian apologist who died in a tragic car accident in 1975. He served with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship and taught evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Among his many accomplishments were two books that God has used greatly to encourage and equip Christian for the important task of Apologetics. They are *Know Why You Believe* and *Know What you Believe*. The book *Know Why You Believe* was selected by *Christianity Today* as one of the 50 most influential books of 20th century evangelicalism. In writing both books Paul Little was obeying the command of our Lord found in 1 Peter 3:15, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.” (ESV). Peter was joining the cry of the psalmist who prayed in Psalm 119:41-42, “Let your faithful love come to me, LORD, your salvation, as you promised. Then I can answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word.”

2) Stanza Waw, the 6th in Psalm 119 (vs. 41-48) is a prayer for help (vs. 41-43) and a pledge of fidelity (vs. 44-48) to God and His Word. The centrality, once again, of God’s Word is highlighted by Old Testament Scholar Derek Kidner who points out that in this psalm the Word is “appropriated (41), trusted (42b, 43b), obeyed (44),

sought (45) and loved (47 f.)” (*Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 425). The ability to answer well the critic, the one “who taunts me” (v.42) is made possible by God’s enablement as he works in us to rightly use His word as we define our faith (what I believe) and defend our faith (why I believe).

I. I will pray for help and be ready to answer the scornful 119: 41-43

1) The Psalmist begins this stanza by asking God to be faithful to the promises in His Word. He asks first that the Lord’s “steadfast love” (CSB, “Faithful love;” NLT, “Unfailing love;” NASB, “loving kindnesses”) would “come to me.” Second, he asks that God’s salvation, here probably meaning deliverance, would come to him “according to your promise.” In other words what God has promised he wants, he needs, to experience. He longs for the promises of God to be realized right now in the challenging and difficult experiences of life.

2) Verse 42 gives the reason for the prayer request, “Then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me.” *The Message* says, “Then I’ll be able to stand up to mockery.” Evidently the psalmist is under attack for his faith. He is being ridiculed, mocked, made fun of, by cynics, mockers and scoffers. He wants to be ready to answer them and refute the errors of their arguments and false accusations. He knows that to do this he needs to be renewed and strengthened by the Lord (*Yahweh*). He also knows that the foundation upon which he is to

make his defense is the Word of God that he trusts in (v. 42). He knows apart from the word he has no hope, no apologetic, no defense. This moves him to pray that the Lord will not withhold his word of truth when he speaks. He humbly and honestly confesses that his only hope is in the Word of God (“my hope is in your rules”).

3) God’s truth can always silence the devil’s lies and the empty and false attacks of his followers. We should never forget that the wisdom of this world and its prophets and philosophers will always be opposed to the wisdom of God and His Word. Today brilliant minds confront the minds of our college students, subtle philosophies entangle them, and clever arguments will seduce them unless they stand strong on the Word of truth (v.43).

4) However, there is a necessary warning we must not neglect. When we are confronted by the enemy in whatever fashion it comes, the Lord will not give us his word as our defense if we do not know His word. His Spirit can only remind us of what we have read, learned and pondered (v.48). But if we truly know the word, then we can confidently claim the promise of Jesus found in John 14:25-26, “I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.”

II. I will keep the Lord's word and share it with others

119:44-46

1) The best apologetic and defense of our Christian faith is a transformed life that speaks the truth in love to all (Eph. 4:15). Our daily obedience and surrender to the Lordship of Christ and his word demonstrates powerfully the reality of our faith.

2) Verses 44-48 are filled with "I statements" as the psalmist pledges his loyalty to the Lord through obedience to the Word of God. He begins by declaring in verse 44, "I will keep your law continually." And, as if that is not enough he adds, "forever and ever." I pledge to always and forever obey your word.

3) Verse 45, as Ross notes, "adds to this the expectation of living at liberty when the LORD fulfills his word and because the psalmist is faithful" (p. 505). This is expressed in the idiomatic phrase, "I shall walk in a wide place." *The Message* paraphrase reads, "I'll stride freely through wide open spaces."

Such liberty and freedom is his because "I have sought your precepts." Study and apply God's word and be set free; not free to do what you want but free to do what you ought! Doing the will of God is always the way of true and real freedom. God's word does not restrict your lifestyle, it liberates it for God's glory and our good. Thus Jesus reminds us in John 8:32, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

4) Such truth is too wonderful to keep to ourselves. The psalmist declares in v. 46, “I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.” With unhindered boldness we speak truth to power, recounting the great acts and faithfulness of our God. I think of Jesus in Isaiah 52:15 and the gospels. I think of Daniel. I think of Paul in Acts. Speaking truth to power is our responsibility. It is also our privilege.

III. I will love God’s word and meditate on it continually 119:47-48

1) Our stanza comes to a close with our author proclaiming his “delight in (v. 47) and love for God’s word” (Ross. 506). God’s words is not a burden it is a blessing. So the psalmist sings, “I find delight in your commandments which I love.” The verb tense indicates a present and continuing delight in God’s commandments. He enjoys the word.

2) He also loves the word, something he declares twice. As tangible evidences of this he will do two things, one outward and one inward. First, he will lift up his hands towards the commandments he loves. He will visibly testify for all to see his love for God and His word. Second, he will mediate on God’s word, here referred to as “God’s statutes.” That which goes deepest into the heart goes out widest to the world. Boldness in witnessing flows from a deeply ingrained (meditation) love and delight in God and His Word. Truth moves

from the head to the heart to the mouth and even the hands. The Word of God has captured the whole man, set him free, and given him a liberty in life that cannot be contained. When we delight in God's word, love God's word, and obey God's word, sharing its message just comes natural. We can't help ourselves. We have to speak. We cannot remain silent.

On April 18, 1521, the great Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) stood before Emperor Charles V and an examination council at the Diet of Worms.

Challenged to retract and recant his writings, he chose to obey Psalm 119:46-48 after a night of prayer and meditation. Luther boldly and famously 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 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.” (Quoted in Boice, *Living by the Book*, 60).

Conclusion

Spurgeon wisely says, “there are three sorts of blasphemies of the godly – the devils, heretics and slanderers. The devil must be answered by the internal word of humility; heretics by the external word of wisdom; slanderers by the active word of a good life” (*TOD*, vol. 3, 232). To say it another way we must be a Psalm 119 kind of person. To say it still another way, we must follow in the footsteps of our Savior, the Lord Jesus. When tempted by the devil, he laid him out with his humble appeal to the Word of God (Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4:1-13). When he was attacked by the Pharisees concerning whose Son is the Messiah, his superior wisdom sent them scurrying, “nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him another question” (Matt. 22:46). And, when wrongly charged by the religious leaders the day he was crucified, even Pilate was forced to confess after examining our Lord, “I find no guilt in him” (John 18:38). May we too speak and live in such a way that those who would find fault with our faith be silenced because the evidence for the truth of what we believe and who we follow is simply too strong to deny.