

# THEN SINGS MY SOUL | *Capturing the spirit of worship from the Psalms for Today*

## Lesson 4 | The Confidence We Sing

In our previous Psalms study, we grouped the Psalms in our workbook into our own groupings. The basic form or structures of lament and praise are the basis of most every psalm and so far we have covered modern hymns that follow the ideas that Jewish laments and psalms of praise followed.

Today, in light of current events, I want to explore modern songs that convey the sentiments of the Psalter's psalms of confidence. In our previous study, we note that confidence or trust psalms are characteristic of how they demonstrate trust in the Lord. Since Jews view their lives as a pilgrimage, the psalms reflected the tough, challenging journey of trials and hostilities until the pilgrim could meet God in His Presence (c.f. Ps 27:4). When individual in these Psalms would reflect on his journey to trust, the singer would call on the covenant people to trust in the sovereign as a community. All of their troubles were submerged under their strong confidence in Yahweh's power and strength. The key idea in these psalms of confidence is that *Yahweh will protect His covenant people*.

So with these songs we consider how Christians manifest such confidence. There is without doubt one passage of Scripture that evokes this call to praise with words that exude a confidence that was centered in the Christian's hope and confidence – the Messiah: Jesus, the Son of God. Listen to how Paul concludes this section of Romans 8:

*31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Or here again in the letter to the Ephesians:

*3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

The rock bed of our hope is the work God accomplished in Christ Jesus. Paul said that Jesus *"was delivered over because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification"* (Romans 4:25). These hymns reflect this confidence.

**Blessed Assurance | Fanny J. Crosby.** Tune composer Phoebe Knapp (1839-1908) played a melody to Fanny Crosby and asked, "What does the melody say to you?" and she said, **"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!"** and proceeded to recite the entire first verse of this now-famous hymn. Crosby (1820-1915), blind at the age of six weeks, began composing hymns at age six. At 15, she became a student at the New York Institute of the Blind and joined the faculty at 22, teaching rhetoric and history. Author of over 8,000 hymn texts, she drew her inspiration from her own faith. "Blessed Assurance" is one of her most popular hymns we sing today. First published in 1873, the hymn has inspired many. Crosby saw confidence in Christ now as the promise of "the foretaste of glory divine!"; anchoring the hymn on that promise of heaven, a place where "perfect submission" and "perfect delight" [v. 2] will take place. The earthly existence is one of "watching and waiting, looking above" [v. 3]. As we place confidence in Christ, we feel ourselves "filled with his goodness" and "lost in his love" [v. 3]. The chorus tells us to "prais[e]. . . my Savior all the day long."

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Refrain: This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels, descending, bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Savior am happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

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**What a Friend We Have in Jesus | Joseph Scriven.** Some of our best-loved hymns about the faithful's confidence were written, just as were the laments, in times of great sadness such as this one. Despite the pain, this poet was able to find comfort in Jesus and point others to this source of unshakable joy with their music.

Joseph Scriven's hymn on the friendship of Jesus, the comforter and burden-bearer. Scriven (1820-1886) was a native of Dublin, Ireland, born in 1820 and graduated from Trinity College. At 25, he emigrated to Canada and lived there until his death at Port Hope on Lake Ontario, in 1886. When a young man, he was engaged to be married to a lady he had loved for a long time. All preparations had been made for the wedding ceremony and the date had been fixed. But shortly before the wedding day arrived, his fiancée accidentally drowned, and he was plunged into the deepest sorrow. From this sad experience came a deep sense of his dependence upon Christ and of the great truth so helpfully expressed in his lines:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!

Out of the intense sympathy wrought in his heart by this experience, he wrote the hymn to comfort his mother in her own sorrow and sent it to her in Ireland. How it came to be first published is not known, as he had not intended it for general use. Only after his death was he discovered to have penned the words that have lifted many.

His private pain has become for many an anthem of great confidence and surety that Christ will take and shield thee and in Him we will find a refuge and solace. Our confidence is in our confidante – in prayer.

**The Lord is My Light | by C.E. Couchman.** One of the great changes in hymn writing among churches of Christ has been placing texts of Psalms to our typical hymnody. R.J. Stevens used many Psalm texts, usually modified, to match a well known melody of another hymn so we could relish in the singing of the words of the Psalmists. But this hymn, a favorite of mine, put the words of Psalm 27, a Psalm of Confidence, into a musical setting by her with her word settings as well as the music. It is a powerful testimony to the value of resetting and reusing the Divinely inspired words for every generation.

Just as the others, the center of these songs of confidence are the "God of my salvation." And just as the psalmists of old turned from singer to exhorter, this song sings personally of what "I" know, feel and petition of the Lord – and then in the Chorus, calls all who sing with them (the "I") to join in the confident walk with strength and courage as we all "wait on the Lord."

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there..

The LORD is my light and my salvation.  
Whom shall I fear?  
And He is my strength, the defense of my life.  
Whom shall I fear?

Have mercy, O LORD, and answer my cry.  
Turn not away.  
For You are my help, the God of salvation.  
Turn not away.

[Chorus]  
Wait, wait, O wait on the LORD.  
Be strong and take courage!  
Wait on the LORD.  
Wait, wait, O wait on the LORD.  
Be strong and take courage!  
Yes, wait on the LORD.

O LORD, lead me now in Your path straight and even.  
Teach me Your way.  
I will not despair; Your goodness sustains me.  
Teach me Your way.

To dwell in His house all the days of my life:  
This shall I seek.  
And oh, to behold the LORD in His beauty!  
This shall I seek.