

Psalm 119:137 Part One

We just finished the seventeenth section of Psalm 119, verses 129 thru 136. Remember, we left off with our Psalmist shedding tears over those who had professed to know God but were not obedient to His commands. Our Psalmist's heart was crying both for the destruction he knew would come upon the unfaithful from God, who is perfect in judgement, and also because God's name, whom He loved so dearly, was being dishonored by the actions of those who professed to know Him.

Our Psalmist now chooses to concentrate on the righteousness of God. This fact alone is an encouragement. He could have chosen to continue to focus on his sorrow, the circumstances of disobedience that surrounded him and even threatened to take him down, or his own exhaustion of staying in the fight. Instead, his next writing to us revolves around the purity of God.

How would you describe your personality? What qualities make up your character? What behaviors do others see in you?

Consider. *Think of those you know well. It is possible to predict their reaction to certain situations based on their character. You can ascertain what will cause them to be happy or sad or even mad. In our eighteenth section in Psalm 119, we will explore the character of God. The Hebrew letter at the beginning of each verse in this section is "P" - TSADDI. God's purity is the overriding theme. Our lack of holiness is magnified when compared to God's perfect righteousness.*

Ps 119:137 Righteous art Thou, O LORD, and upright are Thy judgments.

righteous <tsadiyq> just, lawful, righteous

The synonyms listed for the adjective righteous in WordWeb are clean-handed, good, innocent, just, moral, upright, virtuous and worthy.

What does it imply to describe someone as 'just'? Let's look at some definitions.

just: (adjective), 1. Used especially of what is legally or ethically right or proper or fitting; 2. Fair to all parties as dictated by reason and conscience; 3. Free from favoritism or self-interest or bias or deception; conforming with established standards or rules; 4. Of moral excellence.

God is described as being righteous throughout the Bible. Earlier in Psalm 119, David proclaims God's righteousness.

Ps 119:75-76 I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me. O may Thy lovingkindness comfort me, according to Thy word to Thy servant.

Below are a few more examples.

Ps 116:5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.

Da 9:14 "Therefore, the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our **God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done**, but we have not obeyed His voice.

Ezr 9:15 "**O LORD God of Israel, Thou art righteous**, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as [it is] this day; behold, we are before Thee in our guilt, for no one can stand before Thee because of this."

Ps 48:10 As is Thy name, O God, So is Thy praise to the ends of the earth; **Thy right hand is full of righteousness.**

Ps 65:5 **By awesome [deeds] Thou dost answer us in righteousness**, O God of our salvation, Thou who art the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea;

Ps 97:2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.**

Ps 145:17 **The LORD is righteous in all His ways**, and kind in all His deeds.

Jer 23:6 "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, '**The LORD our righteousness.**'"

I've compiled a list of several commentaries on the explanation of God's righteousness:

He is infinitely holy in His nature.

He is just and faithful.

There is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God.

He is unable to do any wrong to any of His creatures.

Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it.

The righteousness of God brings comfort: He does not change with time or circumstances.

How does thinking upon and understanding God's righteousness affect you?

Several weeks ago, we talked about a litmus test. This is a test that relies on a single indicator for showing the acidity or alkalinity in a solution. The idea of having a single indicator is the focus. It's the thought of something being either right or wrong, black or white - there is no middle ground or gray area.

Consider. *God, who is perfectly righteous. His word, given to us, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is perfectly righteous. We have a measure of right and wrong. What to do and what not to do. It is clear, it is true, and it is God's righteousness handed to His children to know and to follow.*

Esteeming God's righteousness will result in accepting His judgments as perfect. No questioning, no wondering, no pouting. Acceptance whether

we understand or not. Whatever God chooses to portion out to man is just, precisely what is deserved. Not too much, not too little. He hasn't missed something or misinterpreted the situation. Whatever God tells us to do is right, it is what He expects of His children. The different situations in our lives are what He has allowed, for our good and for His glory. The only thing we need to remember is that God's righteousness demands our obedience when we understand who He is.

However, God's judgment has been questioned throughout time. Read Jeremiah's question of God's ways as he contemplates the prosperity of the wicked.

Jer 12:1 Righteous art Thou, O LORD, that I would plead my case with Thee; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with Thee: **Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?**

Job also had a rough time accepting God's ways.

Job 21:7 **"Why do the wicked still live, Continue on, also become very powerful?"**

It is not uncommon for someone to ask why God allows sin or why bad things happen to 'good' people or to hear the statement, "If there is a God, why is there sin? If God is love, He wouldn't allow people to suffer."

How often have you personally heard the words, "It's not fair"? Or even thought to yourself that something shouldn't have happened. Or wondered why a tragedy occurred. It often seems that those who cheat or 'don't follow the rules' seem to do better in terms of 'success' than those who try to live righteously. Have you considered why someone that seems so nice gets fraught with many hardships? And those who live according to their own plan seem to do exceptionally well?

"When we find ourselves tempted to distrust by looking to the prosperity of the wicked, let us look up to God, and consider his nature, his word, his works, and we shall find comfort." Treasury of David

"Righteousness is essential to him, it is himself; and he can no more defraud the godly of their promised comforts, not let the wicked go unpunished in their sins, than he can deny himself to be God, which is impossible." -- William Cowper.

Earlier in the Psalms, David gives us some good advice concerning the apparent success of those who did not follow God. He tells us not to fret or be envious of their prosperity.

Ps 37:1 (A Psalm of David.) Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers.

Ps 73:2-3 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling; my steps had almost slipped. 3 For I was envious of the arrogant, [As] I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Read this beautifully worded definition of God's righteousness: "Essentially, originally, and of himself; naturally, immutably and universally, in all his ways and works of nature and grace; in his thoughts, purposes, counsels, and decrees; in all the dispensations of his providence; in redemption, in the justification of a sinner, in the pardon of sin, and in the gift of eternal life through Christ." TOD, John Gill

In the book of Habakkuk, the prophet poses questions to God that ask why it seems the wicked are prospering while the godly are being oppressed. God exhorts them to patience while they trust in His righteous judgement that will come. In other words, God is in control. He knows full well what is going on with every person in every circumstances. He sees the situations so much better than we ever could. He reads a man's heart perfectly and will render His perfect righteousness and judgments in His perfect time.

Take a look at our verse again.

Ps 119:137 Righteous art Thou, O LORD, and upright are Thy judgments.

"Upright are thy judgments, the promises and threatenings and the executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause and will judge accordingly." Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

De 32:4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

Ne 9:33 "However, Thou art just in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.

Ro 9:14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Pr 11:31 If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, How much more the wicked and the sinner!

Verse 137: 'The emperor Mauritius [Gibbon, Decline and Fall, ch. 46], seeing all his children slain [his five sons were murdered one by one in his presence] before his face at the command of the bloody tyrant and usurper Phocas, himself expecting the next stroke—exclaimed aloud, in the words of David, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments."—Bp. Horne. This story is a good exposition of the verse; and if satisfactorily authenticated, would be a most admirable exemplification of the genuine tendency of the doctrine contained in it, namely, confidence in God, and acquiescence in his will under the severest calamities. Thomas Scott (emphasis mine)

How does God's absolute righteousness comfort you? Are you able to rest in His plan even though it may seem difficult to understand?