

The eighteenth division of Psalm 119, beginning with verse 137 has been dealing with the perfect righteousness of God and His word. Even in the worst difficulties, we can have confidence in God's faithfulness. The last two verses contained in this section continue on with **the steadfast soul of David clinging to what he knows is true and seeking to find his preservation in God's testimonies.**

Ps 119:143-144 Trouble and anguish have come upon me; [Yet] Thy commandments are my delight. ¹⁴⁴ Thy testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.

You've heard the saying "caught between a rock and a hard place". This is an idiom that basically means you are facing two equally unpleasant, dangerous, or risky alternatives, where the avoidance of one ensures encountering the harm of the other (*idioms, thefreedictionary*). *Wiktionary* explains this saying as "having the choice between two unpleasant or distasteful options; in a predicament or quandary".

When our Psalmist speaks of trouble, this is the picture he is painting for us. The Hebrew word is *tsar* meaning narrow, a tight place, an opponent, adversary, affliction, or distress. **Isn't it true that sometimes we may feel there is no place to turn that will accommodate a pleasant outcome?** What comes to mind is that often we need to go *through* a circumstance knowing that God's promises are true and He will protect us. God always remains faithful to His character of perfect righteousness, and we can count on His guidance even in our most difficult times. David gives us an additional word for his plight: anguish. When I looked this word up in *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*, I read a similar definition that was given for 'trouble' above: a narrow place, confinement. The idea of being **disabled** by anguish or distress in his trouble is added. I think we are given insight into how pained our Psalmist is in his circumstances. The KJV says, 'trouble and anguish have *taken hold* on me'. These are strong words and feelings that describe his suffering.

How do *you* react when adversity hits you like a ton of bricks, threatening to crush you? What are your options? In what ways are you tempted to react? What is our example?

Ps 119:143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me; [Yet] Thy commandments are my delight.

Incredible! Even in David's suffering, we see his resolve to claim God's righteousness and find joy in His truths! God's commands are the Psalmist's delight. He finds pleasure in them. If we back up a bit in this same Psalm, we read a similar verse.

Ps 119:77 May Thy compassion come to me that I may live, for Thy law is my delight.

We go through various trials, either from those trying to derail us or from our own foolish or sinful choices. Regardless, we will be tried. Sometimes, our troubles may not even be

noticeable to others, they may come from within. We can be distracted in our soul. **Do we cling to God's truths and find delight in His commands in every circumstance? What specific truths can we hold onto that cause us to find joy?**

- The Gospel. **Lu 2:10-11** And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
- The availability of God's Word. **Jer 15:16** Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts.
- God's Faithfulness, even when we are not. **Jas 1:17** Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.
- God knows all things and sees all things correctly. **Psalm 139:1-5**
- The hope we have in Him. **Ro 15:4** For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

We could go on and on with the above list. As we look upon the truths in God's word, no matter what troubles we are experiencing, we can find delight. There is **repetition** of David constantly being drawn to focus on God even in the midst of difficult circumstances. I love the reminder we see in this repetition – We have a need to *continuously* look to God and His truths and promises even when things seem to overwhelm us. All throughout Psalm 119, the importance of clinging to God's faithfulness and righteousness is proclaimed.

Ps 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, As much as in all riches.

Ps 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is truth.

Read what *Matthew Henry's Commentary* says, "All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them and find that peace and pleasure in them which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish".

2Co 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

What do we find ourselves thinking about – the riches we have in Christ or our worldly problems? Are we meditating on the word of God and His eternal promise to us?

It is not easy to avoid the vices that cause us to lose hope in this world, yet, hope placed in God is never lost, instead it is certain, absolute. When we feel as if there is no hope, our

thinking needs to change. **How can our thoughts be redirected?** We've been given the answer in the next verse of this section in Psalm 119.

Ps 119:144 Thy testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.

Here is our request to God – “give me understanding that I may live”. God is the one who gives us the mindset to focus on His truths. God is the one who gives us understanding of His promises. God restores our hope, He preserves and protects us, He is our salvation.

We can pray to God for more understanding, more peace, more hope, more strength and anything and everything else needed to continue to live according to His commands, with a heart of joy. We have a promise that we will live forever in heaven! In the meantime, we can count on God's grace for comfort as we go through trials.

We can spend more time in God's word for more understanding. **What better thing is there to do when you are discouraged or feel like giving up than to go to the source of eternal joy?**

Consider. What does forever mean? The Hebrew word *owlam* means the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind, eternity, everlasting. The word forever in our English language is used in a blasé manner for many things. We use phrases like, “I will love you forever or this or that forever” but what we really mean is, “until a better substitute is found”. We are a finicky people and have good intentions much of the time, but often, we are unable to follow through. God's forever is vastly different. **When we read that His word is righteous forever there is no underlying possibility of change.** Therein is our hope. Therein is our joy. God's children have a promise of life eternal. It is certain and affords us the ability to continue on through any difficult circumstance with a heart centered on Truth.

What is the alternative to having certain hope? Death. Life without God leads to death, eternal separation from Him and all that is true. We are either saved by God's grace or condemned by our sin.

Review the eighteenth section of Psalm 119.

God is righteous (**Ps 119:137**); God's judgments are righteous (**Ps 119:138**); God's word is righteous and leads us to a zeal that pines for those who do not follow Him (**Ps 119:139**); God's word is pure and leads us to a love for it (**Ps 119:140**); Even when we feel small and despised, we are upheld by God's word (**Ps 119:141**); God's righteousness is everlasting and true (**Ps 119:142**); and we can take delight in God's word no matter the trouble that surrounds us (**Ps 119:143**).

The above is true joy, joy that is only found in Him, joy that understands that without the precious gift of Jesus Christ, my sin will lead to the certainty of death and separation from

God rather than eternal life. The Psalmist understood this. **Do you?** The Psalmist embraced these truths. **Do you?**

Patrick/Lowth/Whitby/Lowman Commentary makes this statement, "all the declarations Thou hast made of Thy will to us are so just and true that they will never fail our expectation: O give me wisdom to order my life according to them! And then it shall not be in the power of my enemies to make me miserable".

Ps 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all [my] heart.

Ps 119:66 Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Thy commandments.

2Co 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

1Jo 5:20-21 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Joh 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

Isa 43:11 "I, even I, am the LORD; and there is no savior besides Me.

"God's testimonies to man cannot be assailed, they are righteous from beginning to end; and though ungodly men have opposed the divine justice, especially in the plan of salvation, they have always failed to establish any charge against the Most High. Long as the earth shall stand, long as there shall be a single intelligent creature in the universe, it will be confessed that God's plans of mercy are in all respects marvellous proofs of his love of justice: even that he may be gracious Jehovah will not be unjust." *Treasury of David*

Join with me in praying all the more for understanding of God's word, for increased love for His truths, that by it we can live in the joy of God's promises through all circumstances. "Give me understanding that I may live" – this is the gospel. Grasp it, Claim it, Trust in it, and Share it.