

Psalm 119:137-144 The Bible Mirrors God Falls Ch. PM 6/29/2025

The stanza is matched up to letter 18 out of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The letter is Tsadhe is the equivalent of binding together two English letters, a T followed by an S.

The first word is translated as Righteous. In this stanza, righteousness is uppermost in the author's mind, as we deduce because he referred to righteousness 5 times. Twice at the beginning in verse 137, once in verse 138, once in verse 142, and once again at the end of this stanza, in verse 144. Righteousness is the thread that binds the stanza together. The Psalmist was glad to be declaring that the LORD our God is Himself righteous. The righteousness of God is a massive theme of the Bible.

Righteousness refers to God's perfect conformity to His actions in comparison to His own intrinsic moral nature. God only takes actions that are consistent with Himself. The righteousness of God is the integrity of God. God aligns with Himself.

In verse 138, righteousness is combined with faithfulness, and again in verse 142, righteousness is combined with faithfulness, which in the ESV Bible is translated with the English word "true." Righteousness is combined with faithfulness to describe the Lord. The author was going through a time of great personal difficulty, and in that time he was drawn to the Lord for these twin reasons: righteousness and faithfulness.

Because The Bible mirrors the character of God, we get to know Jesus through the Word. In what aspects?

1. Right. (v.137-138)

Verse 137, "*Righteous are You, O LORD, and right are Your rules.*"

"rules" = rulings or verdicts or judgments, the expression of the mind of God on a case. Because God is always right, all of God's verdicts are right!

Since righteousness is the character of God, it is also the character of God's Word. The Bible mirrors God!

Verse 137, *Righteous are You, O LORD!* So, God is righteous.

Verse 144, *Your testimonies are righteous.* So, God's Word is righteous.

His Word is thoroughly proven and guaranteed to last. God's Words are as righteous as His person and His Words are as trustworthy as Himself.

In verse 137b ("*right are Your rules/rulings*") and in verse 138a, ("*You have appointed Your testimonies in righteousness*") there are two affirmations that what God says in His rules or rulings are consistent with God's own righteousness, and aligned with God's own covenant-faithfulness.

Verse 138, "*You have appointed Your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness.*"

The Word of God gives expression to the fact that God Himself is righteous.

God is right or righteous in His very being, so that righteousness is mirrored in His Word. Deuteronomy 32:4, “*all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.*” Psalm 145:17, “*The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His works.*” Genesis 18:25, “*...Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?*”

Anyone interested in doing right would do well to study the Bible. Statesmen and government officials should study the Bible. Judges and law enforcement officers should study the Bible. Parents should study the Bible. Anyone who believes that morality matters should look to the ultimate standard of right and wrong God and His Word.

The righteous words of the righteous God are completely predicable and trustworthy, which brings us to our second point – the aspect of reliable.

2. Reliable. (v.139-143)

Verse 139, “*My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget Your Words.*”

Zeal can be positive, for example, in zeal for God. Or, zeal can be negative, for example in sinful jealousy. Here in verse 139, the reason the servant was consumed with zeal, was because he was upset that God’s Word was being ignored!

SI - In his 1983 acceptance speech for the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn] recalled the words he heard as a child, when his elders sought to explain the ruinous upheavals that were taking place in Russia while Solzhenitsyn was a boy: “Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.” He added, “If I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: ‘men have forgotten God.’”

Consider the experience of our Lord Jesus, as He looked at the temple and the religious leaders in the temple. Jesus was zealous enough to overturn the greedy tables of merchandise, and Jesus was even zealous enough to chase people out with a whip! Zeal was consuming Jesus. In all that Jesus felt and said and did, Jesus did not sin! Zeal can be holy and good.

Jesus was consumed with zeal for the same reason the Psalmist was consumed with zeal - because the people around Jesus had forgotten what God’s Word said about the temple – it was to be a house of prayer, not a place to make money. While Jesus was stirred with zeal, He made a statement about His death and resurrection. Through this statement, we get to know Jesus better. We get to know that Jesus is just as reliable as God the Father. In John 2:19, Jesus made this statement “...destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 2:22, “*When therefore [Jesus] was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*”

Verse 140, *"Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and Your servant loves them."*

God's spoken promises have been tested! The promises have endured the parting of the Red Sea, the fiery furnace, the exile, and the raising of the dead, and in each instance, the promises of God have proved pure and lasting.

Your servant loves them (that is, he loves the promises of God.) This love for the Word of God has been a sustained emphasis throughout Psalm 119. Especially in focus here in our verse is the love of the promises of God.

Each of us as a Christian also shares this love, since every one of us is captivated by the promises of God. The promise of forgiveness of our sins. The promise of everlasting life. The promise of seeing God in heaven.

Again, here we get to know Jesus better through the Word of God. Jesus knew that the words of His Father in heaven were reliable. Jesus said in John 8:26. *"...He who sent Me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world."* Jesus knew that the promise of God the Father was thoroughly tested! Jesus loved the promises of God the Father!

Verse 141, *"I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts."*

What about the situation when the servant was despised? What should he do when he was despised or hated? The servant's response in verse 141 was "I DO NOT FORGET YOUR PRECEPTS – THAT IS, I DO NOT FORGET HOW I AM EXPECTED TO SPEAK, WHAT ATTITUDE I AM EXPECTED TO KEEP, AND HOW I, AS A CHILD OF GOD, AM SUPPOSED TO LIVE!" When the believer is despised, the Word of God pre-occupied his mind.

Having a lowly status of being small, or being a little guy, and being considered unimportant or even despised, did not matter to this man in comparison to retaining the Word of God clearly in his thinking and comportment.

Our example is young Daniel who was exalted above the local Babylonians. Think about when Daniel suddenly got promoted. There were local Babylonian men who spent their whole lives in Babylon, and who were the same age as Daniel, and they did not get promoted. Instead, this foreigner Daniel got the position. What could be the reaction from the Babylonian men? They could despise Daniel. When Daniel began to be despised, what should young Daniel do? Not forget God's precepts, but rather he should keep living according to them!

Much later, Paul wrote the same truth as a warning to another godly young in the New Testament era, who was given a ministry position in the kingdom of Christ, and here is what Paul the mentor wrote to the young pastor named Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, *"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*

So, when Timothy began to be despised or persecuted, what should young Timothy do? Timothy should not forget God's precepts, but rather he should keep

living according to them. Paul went on to write in the next two verses what Timothy should do, “...*evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it...*” 2 Tim. 3:13-14.

According to Paul, his young student Timothy should not call down thunder from heaven upon people who despise him. No. Instead, Paul said for Timothy to continue living exactly how Timothy was taught to live, that is, how God’s precepts, which Timothy had learned since infancy in his family, had taught Timothy that he was supposed to live, no matter what. The haters of Timothy may forget God’s precepts, but Timothy did not forget God’s precepts. The haters of this Psalmist may forget God’s precepts, but he does not forget God’s precepts. The haters of Jesus may forget God’s precepts, but Jesus did not forget the precepts of God the Father.

Verse 142, “*Your righteousness is righteousness forever, and Your law is true.*”

How did the Psalmist cope with the difficulties of life when other people did not do what they were supposed to do? He turned to God and was comforted by the fact that God alone is reliable. The Psalmist was preaching truth to himself. The Psalmist was praying truth to God, telling God that God’s law is true, that God’s teachings are true!

The Psalmist was coping with being despised by reminding himself of a bigger perspective, an eternal perspective. Namely, the fact that the righteousness of God is an everlasting righteousness! This eternal perspective about God, also provides a clarity to his view of himself, his view of his opponents, and his view of all of his difficulties.

King David went through his share of days being despised, and having opponents, and King David also reminded himself of the bigger perspective, the eternal perspective, such as Psalm 145:13, “*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*”

So, one takeaway lesson from our study of these 8 verses is this: No matter how bad our situation, we keep reminding ourselves that our righteous God and our faithful God remains committed to His own glory. Our God is committed to His own covenant, and to the promises that He has made. Our God remains committed to His own people. God has everlasting purposes for His righteousness.

Our God is eternally righteous, and our God has spoken. Whatever God has spoken and taught us is the reliable truth itself. Whatever consideration that we have to offer, or new evidence or different perspective that we bring, could not outweigh the fact that the righteousness of our God is everlasting righteousness.

“your Law is true” wrote the Psalmist in verse 142. The law of God is true! It is reliable! So much of what we hear from other sources is unreliable or even

false. Even those sources that are widely considered to be reputable and reliable, can give out false information. Who can we trust? Many politicians lie. Many directors of large corporations lie. Many employees lie. How rare that Jesus never lied.

SI - Years ago, the smaller Douglas Aircraft company was competing with the big Boeing Aircraft company. The Douglas company wanted to sell its first big jets to a Eastern Airlines. War hero Eddie Rickenbacker, the head of Eastern Airlines, told Mr. Douglas that the specifications and claims made by Douglas's company for the DC-8 were close to Boeing's on everything except noise suppression. Mr. Rickenbacker then gave Mr. Douglas one last chance to out-promise Boeing on this feature of noise suppression. So, Mr. Douglas consulted with his engineers. Mr. Douglas came back to Mr. Rickenbacker and reported that he could not make that promise. Mr. Rickenbacker replied, 'I already knew that you can't, I just wanted to see if you were honest.'

Every Word that God has spoken can be trusted. Every Word! That is truly wonderful!

Verse 143, "Trouble and anguish have found me out, but Your commandments are my delight."

Once again, the Psalmist said that trouble and anguish had come upon him. Trouble is on the outside. Anguish is on the inside. Both the external and the internal have found him, have hunted him down, and have submerged him. Paul wrote about this sort of situation in 2 Corinthians 7:5, "*Fighting without and fear within.*" What do we do? Answer: delight in the commandments of God! We delight to do what we are told to do! We do this because God's word is reliable.

3. Required. (v.144)

Verse 144, "Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live."

Notice what the Psalmist prays for in this concluding verse! The key prayer request is for understanding! We need discernment from God!

The Psalmist knew the right prescription for his situation. The prescription was to look to God for the joy that the servant had in the Word. As he did so, he looked to the beauty of the Word and the power of the Word, and he prayed for insight and understanding of the Word. That was the prescription for the servant to save his life, for him to live!

In verse 141, he was small and despised, and in verse 142, trouble and anguish had found him, yet in verse 142, God's law is true, and in verse 143, God's commandments are his delight, and in verse 144, God's testimonies are righteous. Best of all, the Bible will go on being this forever. In verse 142, God's righteousness is righteous forever, and in verse 144, God's testimonies are righteous forever.

God's Word is required for us! Brothers and sisters, we cannot make it without God and His Word. We cannot go on living, unless we have God and His word. God and His Word are required for us to make it to the end of our time on earth! We need God to show us about Himself in order for us to survive our dangerous journey and to live everlastingly. It is the word of God that brings us life!

John 14:6, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

Jesus is the life. Jesus is everlasting life. Jesus is the only way to get to God the Father! The only way to have spiritual life, and life beyond this world is through Jesus Christ. Without understanding of Christ, we will die. In contrast, by true faith in Jesus, we will live.

John 17:3, *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

This is eternal life – to know God the Father and God the Son, Jesus! This is eternal life! KNOWING GOD! Let me know God the Father. Let me know God the Son.

Conclusion:

Sometimes a Christian is like a pinball. The steel ball is shot out by the launcher, bouncing all over, banging against the bumpers, and finally seeking rest down below, only to be slapped by the flippers back up into the fray, bounding this way and that way. We bounce from the bumpers of enemies, to the harshness of people, to the troubles of life, to internal anguish we feel about the situation. We feel like we get thrown around as vigorously as the pinball! Then we get slapped around some more. This is the life of a believer in the OT, in the NT, in Daniel's day and in Timothy's day. We are staggering around. In the middle of our faltering and wobbling, we need something solid. The righteousness of the Bible reflects like a mirror the righteousness of God. It is our God who steadies us. It is our Lord Jesus who pulls us back to safety. It is our faithful Savior who upholds us.

This is a sustained emphasis of Psalm 119 – that despite suffering, a believer will hang onto God's Word. It is also a sustained teaching of the New Testament, such as 2 Corinthians 1:5, *"...as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."*

We get both. We get suffering, and we get comfort. When we get the trouble and distress and suffering, what a delight to come back to God's Word and do what it says – we delight in God's commands! We know that the promises of God for comfort and relief are coming. We hang onto God's Word, because it grants endurance and, in the end, relief.

2 Peter 2:9, *"the Lord knows how to rescue the godly."*