

Psalms 19-08-22a

This is the Thursday evening Bible study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Today is the 22nd of August, 2019. We're continuing our study in the 119th Psalm, resuming tonight with the letter Sade, which is verse 137 and following.

Psalm 119 verse 137. We'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and then we'll begin. Father, we are thankful for your mercy and grace, your provision, your blessing that has been extended to us day by day.

We thank you for this day's blessings and provisions and for the opportunity we have at this point to set aside the responsibilities and cares and challenges of the day to refresh ourselves at the oasis of your word. We thank you for our fellowship. We thank you for the presence of believers of like mind, whether co-located with us or joining us in spirit and in truth.

We thank you for this passage that is before us tonight. We ask that your Holy Spirit will superintend in the presentation and in the reception that each of us will be blessed and be a channel of blessing as we reflect on the truths that are contained here, that it will be a source of comfort and encouragement, motivation and power for each one of us in the days ahead. We pray that in all things our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified.

We pray these things in his name. Amen. If you have not done so already, you might want to turn your attention to Psalm 119 beginning at verse 137.

We're going to read this section. All of these eight verses begin with the letter Tzadeh. Tzadeh is an interesting shape.

It looks kind of like a backward Y with a tail or almost like a letter two, but if you took the number two, the Arabic number two, but if you took the, you'd have to reverse it and then take the initial curl off of it so that it's almost a backward slanted L and then have a sprue sticking off of it. So it looks kind of like a squatty letter Y or a combination of an L and a Y, but it represents a trail and sort of a fork in the road. And this goes back to its original pictogram origins.

And so the trail, the journey, it could mean to hunt or to chase, to pursue. It is also very prominently the first letter in the word for righteousness, Tzadeh. It has the TS sound.

So you have Tzadeh, Tzadeek, which means righteous, Tzadeka, righteousness. There's a whole complex of words. And we're going to see that three of the verses in this section begin with some variation of Tzadek.

And as we start here, the section says, righteous are you O Lord and upright are your judgments. Your testimonies, which you have commanded are righteous and very faithful. My zeal has consumed me because my enemies have forgotten your words.

Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it. I am small and despised, yet I do not

forget your precepts. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and your law is truth.

Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet your commandments are my delights. The righteousness of your testimonies is everlasting. Give me understanding and I shall live.

And you can see in this section the prominence of the concept of righteousness and the word Tzadek and its variants as a theme. And combined with the value of the letter itself, we're not just talking about righteousness as an abstraction or as sort of an ideal or a standard against which things are measured, but this is a process of righteousness, a path, walking a path of righteousness. Practical goodness is what is in view.

So let's begin at verse 137 where it says, righteous are you O Lord and upright are your judgments. One of the first things we find here is a sort of a disagreement. It's a disagreement of number in Hebrew because where it says upright are your judgments, the word upright is singular and judgments is plural.

So they don't agree. And where they don't agree, you don't typically stick them together. And the more usual construction here, the more common way to understand this, and I could give you parallels elsewhere in scripture, but we're not going to take time.

Trust me when I tell you that a righteous are you O Lord and upright refers back to the Lord. The Lord singular is upright. So where it says are in italics in the second clause of verse 137 in my Bible, I have scratched that out because upright doesn't apply to the judgments.

Not that they aren't upright, but this isn't saying that. Righteous are you O Lord and upright. Your judgments ends the verse.

And so we have to supply a missing preposition here. So where I have crossed out are, I've put the word in, in italics. Righteous are you O Lord and upright in your judgments.

The context here, you could just say, Lord, you're righteous and upright. But the context here, the specific facet is reflected in God's judgments, God's justice. So starting off here in the Sade section, the righteousness theme is evident.

God's character is righteous and upright. Its expression, how we understand that and appreciate it is not somebody just saying, you know that God is really holy and he's right and he's upright and he's righteous. Where the psalmist here is observing this righteousness and uprightness is in God's judgments.

So if you look at this in Hebrew, it's very compact. There's really five words in the whole verse. So tzaddik, atah, righteous you, that's the first two words.

And when it says atah, this is emphatic. You uniquely, you emphatically. When it comes to tzaddik, it's you.

Tzaddik, atah, Yahweh, righteous, you yourself. Anytime it supplies this atah or one of the other

pronouns as a separate word instead of a suffix, it's emphatic. And we often try to depict that or express it in English by saying, you yourself.

We have to double in the same way that Hebrew sometimes doubles a verb, dying thou shalt die, judging I will judge. And we say, I will surely judge, or you will surely die when the word is doubled. Well, other times we have to double a word to catch the emphasis in Hebrew.

So I would translate this as righteous you yourself, O Lord. And then you've just got two more words, which is upright your judgment and upright your judgments, mishpat. This is the functions that God exercises as judge of the earth.

Will the judge of all the earth not do right? Abraham asks in the negotiation, the bargaining he tries to make for the city of Sodom. Will the judge of all the earth not do right? Well, God is the judge of all the earth and his judgments are the area where we see his righteousness and his uprightness. And the word for upright here means plumb or straight and level.

This is the reference by which things are assessed, evaluated. You can use a plumb line, you can use a level. So to be correct, to be according to the absolute standard is the idea here.

So you yourself, O Lord are righteous and upright in your judgments. And we supply the word in because there just is no preposition here. Five words in that whole sentence with its suffixes and its prefixes.

So this is the introduction to the section. Our next verse says, your testimonies, which you have commanded are righteous and very faithful. In Hebrew, this is another five word verse, five words.

Starts once again with a variation of the word to command or to charge. And in this case, it is a pl, pl, perfect of a verb, which means to command. So pl is the intensive stem.

So what you have commanded is righteous, your testimonies. So how do you straighten this out? It's only three words in Hebrew. You have commanded righteous, your testimonies, and faithful, very.

That's your five words. So trying to make sense of this, you can see why there's a lot of italics here. So the way I would translate this is to try to get a little bit back to the Hebrew word order.

And so start at, you have commanded righteousness, your testimonies, and faithfulness exceedingly. Your testimonies is right in the middle. So you have commanded righteousness.

You could almost put parentheses, your testimonies. Your testimonies communicate the fact that you have commanded righteousness and exceeding faithfulness. So what does that mean? It sounds like a lot of complex grammar, and I'm just talking about translations here.

What is the psalmist saying? Well, he began by saying, you, oh Lord, are righteous and upright. That's how the section began. So his judgments on the earth are going to reflect his

uprightness and his righteousness.

That's the first verse. So who is God judging? He's judging us. If he's exercising mishpat, justice, somebody is in the court.

God is the judge. You are brought before them as the defendant. And this is going to be a perfect rendition of justice because God himself is righteous and just.

So in the second verse, what is the standard on which this justice is going to be rendered? When you stand before the judgment bar, when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ, when it is appointed for man once to die, and after that, the judgment, whatever judgment we face, the judge is going to be God. He himself is perfect and is going to render perfect justice. What is the standard? Can we be held accountable for things that we don't know? Can we be held accountable? Well, I didn't know there was the law.

I was thinking about this. We had a house in the past where we did some improvements, and I didn't really investigate that I was supposed to get permits and have inspections and things. And so the thing got largely finished, and I didn't really know.

I should have known, but I didn't look into it. The notion came to my mind, and I thought, you know, I really ought to check into that. I probably ought to arrange to get some permits and inspections, but I just kind of let it go.

I thought, ah, who's going to know? And I didn't worry about it. Well, there were in fact, city ordinances and such that pertained. And whether or not I knew it, they were in effect, and ignorance of the law is no excuse.

So God is righteous and upright in his judgments. So the next verse says, when that pertains to me, your testimonies, you have commanded righteousness and faithfulness through your testimonies. We see it in the past.

We know that righteousness and exceeding faithfulness is the standard, and it's reflected in the testimony. So this is elliptical. You have commanded righteousness in your testimonies.

Remember we supplied in in the previous verse? So supply it here. You have commanded righteousness in your testimonies and exceeding faithfulness. That's what God has commanded.

It's intense, intensive. You have absolutely commanded. You have demanded.

Might be a good translation here. You have demanded righteousness in your testimonies and exceeding faithfulness, faithfulness mode. So that's 10 words and two verses.

So now we move to verse 139. We start with God. We look at this interface, this expectation, God's testimonies, communicating, revealing, and commanding God's standard be met.

So we've moved from heaven to the bridge from heaven down to man. What does the Lord require of you? Oh man, do justice, love mercy, walk humbly. So now in this next verse, what is my response? I know who the Lord is.

I know what God has required. What about me? So he says in verse 139, my zeal has consumed me because my enemies have forgotten your words. So down here on earth with a righteous and holy God and his judgments and his demands for righteousness and faithfulness, what's happening down on earth? Well, you've got two types of response.

I respond with zeal. My enemies have forgotten your words. They're ignoring them.

That's the idea. You see the movement from heaven through communication down to what is the reaction or the response. And it's very compact.

He manages to talk about the contrast between those who respond with a positive zeal for God and enthusiasm, a motivation, and those who ignore it and forget it. So looking at this in Hebrew, verse 139, where he says, my zeal has consumed me. You may remember that this idea of zeal consuming occurs other places in the Bible.

And we basically have another five word sentence linked with a conjunction. So there's six words in this sentence. You get two words, and then you have ki.

Remember we talked about kaf meaning because, or on account of, or for, or unto. And then you have three words. So two words, a conjunction, and then three words.

All of this is extremely elliptical and very compact, and it just punches. It's like when Paul goes elliptical in some of his epistles, it's because there's very strong feeling. Few words, maximum punch per word.

So this starts out with the pl, the intensive of samat, which is the word that means to consume or to be consumed, to put an end to, to cut off, to destroy, to exterminate, put an end to, annihilate. This is sort of the equivalent of the Greek when we talk about the son of perdition and things that are destroyed and come to naught. And so in the perfect here, this is something in the past that continues into the present.

So when he says it has consumed me and it is still consuming me, there's this past into the present idea. So it has consumed me. It is consuming me.

I am a person who has been and is consumed by my zeal because have forgotten your words, my enemies. And there's a symmetry here because the word for enemies also begins with sade. So you get the first word in the last word here, beginning with sade.

And in the middle you have because they have forgotten. So my enemies have forgotten your words. My zeal eats me up.

And you'll remember this actually goes back to Psalm 69 verse nine. Keep your finger here and

turn back a few pages to Psalm 69, because we're about to ask ourselves a question. Psalm 69, it's subtitled in your New King James, an urgent plea for help in trouble.

David prays in the midst of affliction to the chief musician set to the lilies of Psalm of David. Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing.

I've come into deep waters where the floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying. My throat is dry.

My eyes fail while I wait for my God. Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head. They are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully.

Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it. I'm being told that I've got to recompense. I've got to fill in for wrongs that I've not even committed.

I'm being held accountable for things that are not only not my fault, but are not even legitimate. O God, you know my foolishness and my sins are not hidden from you. Let not those who wait for you, verse six, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed because of me.

Let not those who seek you be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. You see what's happening here. We're supposed to be shining like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation so that others will look at us and be drawn to God.

Well, when you are being maliciously and wrongfully maligned and accused and charged with nonsense charges, and you're labeled and branded as evil when you're not, what does that do to that testimony where others are supposed to see Christ in us and be drawn to the light and be drawn to the Father and be drawn to Christ when our reputation is being smeared and dragged through the mud? How can I accomplish that purpose of representing Christ as a part of his body on this earth in our age? And so the psalmist here says, I'm supposed to be standing on the rock. I'm supposed to be like the man who built his house on the rock, but instead the floods are coming up to my neck and I am in distress and I'm under attack. They hate me without a cause and there's more of them than the hair on my head.

They are my enemies wrongfully. I haven't done anything wrong, but I'm being held accountable. I've stolen nothing.

I still must restore it. Lord, you know my actual faults and you know where my sins are. Let not those who wait for you be discouraged.

Other believers or those who might be drawn to God, don't have them look at me and be discouraged or be downcast or question faith or question God on my account because of this trial I'm going through and this unjust attack by enemies. Let not those who seek you be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. Don't let other believers or seekers be confounded because for your sake I have borne reproach.

Shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers and an alien to my mother's children. Why? Because zeal for your house has eaten me up and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my garment. I became a byword to them.

Those who sit in the gate, this is the place of human justice, speak against me and I am the song of drunkards. I am mocked and derided and I'm the stuff of gossip and joke and ridicule. As for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord, in the acceptable time.

O God, in the multitude of your mercy, hear me in the truth of your deliverance. Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink. Let me be delivered from those who hate me and out of the deep waters." The deep waters that he mentioned at the beginning of Psalm 69.

Let not the flood water overflow me nor let the deep swallow me up and let not the pit shut its mouth on me. Hear me, O Lord, for your loving kindness, your chesed is good. Turn to me according to the multitude of your tender mercies and do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in trouble.

Hear me speedily, draw near to my soul and redeem it. Deliver me because of my enemies. You know my reproach, my shame and my dishonor.

My adversaries are all before you. Reproach has broken my heart and I am full of heaviness. I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none and for comforters, but I found none.

They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink. And you know the context in which this prophetic portion of the Psalm finds its fulfillment. This is the Lord Jesus on the cross.

Let their table become a snare for them and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened so they do not see and make their loins shake continually. Pour out your indignation upon them.

Let your wrathful anger take hold of them and so on. But the center is back here in verse 9. Zeal for your house has eaten me up and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. In other words, I am a target.

I am maligned and abused because people have sensed or seen the link. I'm a believer. I am trying to live my life in a faithful and trusting manner.

I'm trying to please the Lord in what I do and not men. I do what I do heartily as under the Lord and not under men. And because of that, I receive and have become the target of animosity and abuse.

So zeal for your house. And again, you think when you're talking about David, there is no

standing temple. The tabernacle is in ruins.

So when he says zeal for your house, what is he talking about? This is the heavenly dwelling of God. Zeal for God and everything that God represents and the place where God dwells, the place where his will is done. And you long for that.

This is why, Jesus, we've seen this in Matthew 6 in the example prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's my desire. That's my vision of what would be great.

And because that zeal characterizes me and consumes me, and if you take that away, there's nothing left of me. That's why I'm a target. That's what draws the ire of those who have some other agenda.

Well, this zeal is spoken of two places. This 69.9 is quoted two places in the New Testament. One of them is in John 2, verse 17.

And this is the cleansing of the temple scene. The first time that Jesus cleanses the temple when he makes a whip of cords and drives out the money changers. Zeal for your house has consumed me.

And now there is an earthly temple. And so this zeal manifests itself in this desire to purge it and cleanse it of all of this greedy, self-interested activity. And then the second phrase, the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

You find this in Romans 15.3 quoted by Paul. So this is the idea here in the Sade section. The more we are characterized by God's righteousness, the more we recognize how great it is, how wonderful it is that God is the judge of the earth, and he is perfectly just and upright in his justice.

The more our thinking aligns with his, the more we are going to be outcast and in contrast to what's going on in the earth. And it has never been any worse than it is right now. The sea change that has taken place in the world in general and in this country in particular, the weird standards that have come to be the norm, political correctness, abstract, self-appointed arbiters of righteousness that say, this is what's right.

Attack global warming and let everybody do their own thing. Nothing is wrong. Don't tell anybody they made a mistake.

You can't refer to any aspect of somebody that they themselves don't find acceptable. It's a subjective righteousness and people glory in their shame. And when all of the description that Paul gave in the latter days, men will be lovers of self and on.

It's happening in spades and it's getting worse by the day. And the internet just becomes a vehicle for piling on and for abusing someone to the point of destruction that people can be

destroyed in a matter of minutes on the internet. So that's what is, is in view here.

My enemies have forgotten your words. And that forgetting is in the very same verbal form as zeal consuming. It began in the past and continues in the present.

They have forgotten and they continue to forget. This is characteristic. It's a pattern sin.

My enemies have forgotten your words. So then in verse one 40, he says, your word is very pure. Therefore your servant loves it.

And this first begins once again with the letter Sade. And so you have pure. Sarufa is the word.

And this is purity by fire. So this is metal that has been smelted or been refined, has been heated and had the impurity scooped out. It's that kind of purity.

This is not necessarily abstract goodness. This is tested in the fire, proven by fire, assayed like gold. So pure in the sense of the finest, purified, valuable metal is your word.

And this is what God says. This is from the verb Amar, what, what he has spoken, what he has said. So of highest purity is, is, is what you have said.

Once again, you have exceedingly. So pure your word exceedingly. And we're back to just five words in this verse.

Sarufa, Amarteka, Me'od. Pure your word exceedingly. Then you have the word for servant with the conjunction and the possessive second person suffix.

So, and your servant loves it. Ahav, Ahava. So instead of loving silver and gold, instead of loving, you know, fine, rare, beautiful things on the earth, the Psalmist says, your word is so pure, so valuable.

Your servant loves it. That's the basis of the zeal. Well, what do we think about all this? We've figured out exactly what the Psalmist is saying here, but you see the contrast.

He starts out with God's character, who God is. God has expressed that in his testimonies. There is a reaction and a response on earth.

It is either zeal for those things, or there is reaction against it on the part of the enemies. Now he is in verse 140, moving back up your word, those testimonies, the expression of God's righteousness and justice is pure and your servant loves it. Well, when we come back from the break, we're going to see the people who are despisers and enemies who have forgotten God's words in verse 139.

He's going to revisit them in verse 141. So there is God in heaven, his character, his revelation, and there are two avenues of response. And there doesn't seem to be any middle ground.

You're either zealous and you love it, or you're an enemy and you despise it. We like to think,

well, can't I sort of coast in the comfortable middle? We don't find a comfortable middle expressed. And you notice in the earlier sections of Psalm 119, there's not a comfortable middle.

And the suspicion is, the danger is, if I'm not zealous, and if I don't love it like the purest refined gold, I'm in the other camp. Maybe I'm just a passive, aggressive enemy, but I'm still an enemy. Remember the Lord said, he who is not for me is against me.

And if you're not proactive and zealous, there's only one other category you can be in. And think about how often the Bible dismisses with great derision, the middle ground. I wish that you were hot or cold, but being lukewarm, I'm going to spew you out of my mouth.

Is the idea. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to finish this section because it's going to come back out.

We're still, every single one of these eight verse sections has a chiastic structure, theme in the middle, and comes back out. So your first three verses here, God is righteous, his testimonies, zeal, and then right in the center, your pure is your word exceedingly. And your servant loves it.

That's at the center. That's at the heart. So we'll come back out the other side of the chiasm and see the coda in verse 144, right after our break.