

Do Right By Your Servant

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Psalm 119 verses 121 to 128. And teach me your statutes.

I am your servant. Give me understanding that I may know your testimony. It is time for the Lord to act. For your law has been broken.

Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right. I hate every false way.

That's the word of the Lord. When someone, when there's a powerless person that's being oppressed by people, they often appeal to those in authority and power, right?

To rulers to give them justice. And that's kind of a similar situation here where the psalmist feels that he's being oppressed and is now going to God seeking justice.

[1 : 32] And so twice, in verse 121 and 122, he mentions the word oppressed. He says, I've done what is just and right. Do not lead me to my oppressors. Give your servant a pledge of good.

Let not the insolent oppress me. And the word oppressed, it usually means to exploit. It's often used in context throughout the Old Testament to refer to exploiting someone that, for example, the poor, who is unable to repay a debt, for example, and exploiting them.

So it's used in that context, in that kind of light, in Leviticus 19.13, Deuteronomy 24.14, 1 Samuel 12.3. And so that seems to be, so he's using that as a metaphor to talk about how he's being wronged, treated unjustly.

He's being exploited wrongly by evildoers. And now he continues that kind of imagery when he says, he prays to God in verse 122, give your servant a pledge of good.

So the expression to give a pledge of good literally means to stand surety for someone. So to basically, in modern terms, be a cosigner of a debt, to take responsibility for payment for someone that can't repay a debt, right?

[2 : 55] So he's continuing that same imagery. He's saying, the evildoers are oppressing me, they're exploiting me. And so give your servant a pledge of good. Be, stand surety for me. Take responsibility for me, for my debt, and pay for me.

And basically, he's asking for justice. And the reason why the psalmist can cry out to God this boldly is because he says in verse 121, I have done what is just and right.

He believes that he has lived with integrity. He has lived to please God. He has done what is just and right. And because it is just and right, he says in verse 123, my eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.

So the word right in verse 121 and the word righteous in verse 123 are different forms of the exact same Hebrew word. And so there's a connection there.

Because the psalmist has done what is right, it's right of God to fulfill his promise and to deliver him because the psalmist has done according to God's commands.

[4 : 02] And so he says, and not just, and he has done what is right as God's servant. That word is repeated three times in this passage.

Verse 122, give your servant the pleasure of good. Verse 124, deal with your servant according to your steadfast love and teach me your statutes. And then 125, I am your servant.

Give me understanding that I may know your testimony. So he's saying, I belong to you, Lord. I am yours. You owe me. You are responsible for me.

So I'm being exploited in this situation. Please, as I am your servant, I belong to you. So be my surety. Stand surety for me and deliver me.

And as he's doing that, as he's praying that, he's not just consumed with just being delivered from his own, the oppression that he's facing.

[4 : 59] Even though he says he has done what is just and right, he's lived according to God's commands, he's not complacent. He doesn't stop there. He says, and he asks, praise God to give him further understanding to teach him more and more of his words so that he can live even more in accordance with God's will.

So that's what he prays in 124 and 125. Teach me your statutes. I am your servant. Give me understanding that I may know your testimonies. I think this kind of highlights the fact that the more we learn and learn God's word, the more we dive deeply into God's word, the more we learn that it really is unfathomable.

No one can plumb its depth, right? And likewise, the more we obey God, the more we become like God, the more we realize how lacking we are, how unholy we are, how selfish we are, how sinful we are, right?

So it's kind of a paradox. There's a Puritan prayer that we've used in the past as a confession of sin in our church. It's entitled Paradox. And it goes this way.

It says, O changeless God, under the conviction of your spirit, we learn that the more we do, the worse we are. The more we know you, the less we know. The more holiness we have, the more sinful we are.

[6 : 10] The more we love, the more there is to love. And the psalmist, as someone who does what is just and right, knows that there's more to be learned. Teach me your statutes.

Give me understanding that I may know your testimonies. And when God comes to his deliverance, it won't just be giving him what is due to him, giving him his right, but it will also be in the punishing of evildoers, right?

So that's why verse 126 says, It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken. And God's going to punish evildoers and reward the righteous.

And therefore, he concludes in verses 127 and 128 with two therefore sentences. Therefore, I love your commandments and above gold, above fine gold.

That's an often used imagery, right? I mean, I think even just in the psalms that we've been going through on Wednesday, we've seen that multiple times, right? That God's word is more precious than gold, even fine gold, right?

[7 : 16] And often it's described as sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb, right? And if you think about it, that's a really profound thing to say because how many people in our world, in our society, I mean, sacrifice their integrity, sacrifice their friends, sacrifice their family, sacrifice their own health to get wealthy, right?

they value wealth. So many people live for monies, live for fine gold. But the psalmist is saying, no, I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.

That's a really high praise. It's saying, I value this. I cherish God's word. I want to live in accordance with it. And not only that, he says, therefore, verse 120, I consider all your precepts to be right. I hate every false way. He considers all of God's precepts to be right. He doesn't presume to put himself above God's word, to judge it, to determine right for himself, to say, whatever I deem right, whatever seems right to me is right.

He says, no, I consider all your precepts to be right. He seeks to live in accordance with God's word. He says, I hate every false way. Notice the contrast between 27 and 128.

[8 : 32] He says, I love your commandments. And then he says, I hate every false way. That love-hate dichotomy, you really can't have one without the other. You can't say, I love God's commandments and then say, well, I condone false evil ways.

To condone false evil ways is to spurn righteousness, is to spurn God's commandments. You can't have one without the other. To love God's commandments, you need to hate evil doing.

You have to hate sin. And the only way to hate sin is to love God's commandments and to do it. So that's what, that's the dichotomy that you see there. And, and, having gone through the entire stanza, we're left with the, with the realization that, though relatively speaking, maybe in some ways we have lived justly and righteously as the psalmist claims to have in truth according to, in light of God's ultimate perfect standards, all of us have broken God's law, right?

And it says in verse 126, it is time for the Lord to act for your law has been broken. That should leave us trembling in fear because we have broken God's law.

And it is time for the Lord God to act, to bring justice, to punish evil doers. That's our plight. And, and, and that's where this psalm really points to its fulfillment in Jesus.

[9 : 59] It says over and over again, describes a servant who does right, servant who is just, servant of God who, who has done what is right. And, and that really points to the servant of the Lord that Isaiah prophesies about over and over again.

The servant of the Lord will come to do right, to bring justice, as it says in Isaiah 42, 2, 1, Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights.

I put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. Then Jesus is described over and over again throughout the New Testament as a fulfillment of this servant of the Lord that Isaiah prophesies about.

And, of course, the classic passage that we're all familiar with, Isaiah 53, verses 4 to 11, it says this about the servant of the Lord. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

[11 : 05] All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, just like the psalmist is saying here.

He was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before it shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

So Jesus really fulfills this servant, this servant that's here in our stanza, Psalm 119, 121-128.

He was oppressed, like the psalmist, but he was oppressed and he did not get justice because he should have been, he should have triumphed, he should have been, he should have experienced victory and triumph and glory while during his time on earth, but instead he was oppressed, instead he was killed on the cross because he was standing in for us who deserved, who had broken God's laws, but he was standing in for us.

[12 : 27] He died in our place, crucified for our sins so that his righteousness can be imputed to us and the privileges that he alone deserves can be enjoyed by us.

And so it's because of what Jesus has done in fulfilling this psalm that we now can really apply this psalm to our own lives. And cry out to God and pray to God in the same way as the psalmist does here.

Thank you. Thank you.