

Psalm 119:141-142

In the first verse of this section of 8, we read about God's righteousness and perfect judgment, the faithfulness of His word, David's anger towards those who had forgotten God's word, and his contemplation on the purity of God's word. Last week, in verse 140, we saw how these truths led the Psalmist to love God's word. Now, in verse 141, David pens, **"I am small and despised. [Yet] I do not forget Thy precepts"**.

small <tsa'lyr> little; (in number) few; (in age) young; (in value) ignoble:--least, little (one), small (one).

Have you ever felt small and despised? How would you define what it means to say or think this about yourself?

WordWeb defines small as 1. Limited or below average in number or quantity or magnitude or extent; 2. Limited in size or scope; 3. (of children and animals) young, immature; 4. Low or inferior in station or quality. The definition goes on to explain that you can be made to seem small or less (especially in worth), and finally, slight or limited, especially in degree or intensity or scope.

I had to look up the word 'ignoble'. This word means to be completely lacking nobility in character, quality or purpose (*WordWeb*).

Would it be fair to say that David is feeling some adversity? He felt himself small and despised by others. Despised, used in Ps 119:141, is a strong word meaning to disdain or be contemptible or scorned.

"His enemies made no account of him, regarded him as a man without power or ability, and therefore looked down upon him. He appears to accept the situation and humbly take the lowest room, but he carries God's word with him. How many a man has been driven to do some ill action in order to reply to the contempt of his enemies: to make himself conspicuous he has either spoken or acted in a manner which he could not justify. The beauty of the Psalmist's piety was that it was calm and well balanced, and as he was not carried away by flattery, so was he not overcome by shame. If small, he the more jealously attended to the smaller duties; and if despised, he was the more in earnest to keep the despised commandments of God". *Treasury of David*

First, consider **why** David was in this position.

Second, consider **what** David's reaction is to his position.

Third, consider **where** he turned in recognition to his position.

Why was David in this position? Because he loved and followed God. His faithfulness to God bothered others. Consider what happens when people begin to feel uncomfortable or even 'guilty' around others. Often, instead of noting their own error, they attack or belittle someone who is standing out and doing the right thing. The world easily scorns those who try to live according to God's laws. Recall how David was overlooked even in his own family (1 Sam 16:11). Read Isaiah's account of how others reacted to Jesus.

Isa 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

But what was the truth? – In the case of Jesus, He was God, Truth itself – there was none higher! And in the eyes of God, David had great value as do all His children.

What was David's reaction to his position? Although David feels himself small and despised, his reaction is to remain faithful to God's word. Think how easy it might have been for the Psalmist to buckle under pressure. He could have at least decided to keep quiet about his faith or tried to look like he fit in with those who could cause him harm. But that's not what we see. He does not fear man more than God.

Matthew Henry's Commentary says this: "David poor and yet pious, small and despised for his strict and serious godliness, yet his conscience can witness for him that he did not forget God's precepts. He would not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition."

Where did David turn? Adversity caused David to turn *towards* God, to continue to regard God's law. God was his strength and support even in the toughest times. Our example is that even when our place in life seems uncertain, what we can and should do is turn towards God even more. In verse 139 of this Psalm, we read of the anger that David felt because of those who had forgotten God. In verse 141 we see his resignation to remain faithful. It didn't matter how much he felt persecuted or how lowly he felt, he would not forget God's precepts, rather, the Psalmist turns harder towards them.

Where is our hope? Do we turn towards God's promises when we feel inferior to the world? Where does our worth come from? Are we counting on who we are here or who we are in God?

Ps 40:17 Since I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me; Thou art my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.

1Pe 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Jas 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world [to be] rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

We all know people who've run from God or chosen to deny the Truth because things didn't go the way they thought it should or life became too difficult. Often, unfaithfulness is the route taken in adversity. This is contrary to the example seen in Psalm 119:141.

Consider: people are difficult. This should be no surprise, we are born in sin. **Ps 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. We are born to trouble. **Job 5:7** For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward.

But, God is faithful, always. Look at the next verse in Psalm 119.

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

God's righteousness – different than the righteousness we may talk of on earth or given by men.

righteousness <tsedek> to be (causatively, make) right; cleanse, clear self; be justified; turn to righteousness

“It signifies, not only God's inherent righteousness and perfection of nature, but also his method of treating others; his plan of redemption; his method of saving others.”
Adam Clarke's Commentary

God's word is righteousness itself, it is the standard of righteousness and it will last forever, beyond time. It is everlasting – the same at all times and in all places to all peoples in all things.

“It is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.”
Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

Consider. Man's definition of righteousness from *WordWeb*. “An internal sense of righteousness”; adhering to moral principles, morality. Being righteous is characterized by or proceeding from accepted standards of morality or justice.

Man's rules of right and wrong change. What may have been considered unacceptable fifty years ago or even twenty years ago is readily accepted now by majority consensus. There are even examples each of us can think of in just the last few years of the accepted standards of morality changing in our nation and even in the world.

So what do we build our standard of righteousness on? Intelligence, observance, understanding, research, history? The one thing these all have in common are change and men. Change is the opposite of everlasting and no man is perfect. **Where does that leave man's righteousness?** Certainly it cannot be compared to the righteousness of God which is everlasting and perfect.

Ps 111:3 Splendid and majestic is His work; And His righteousness endures forever.

“The principles of God's government are permanent and reliable, and in the deepest distress His people find them a theme of delightful meditation and a source of reviving power”. *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*

Psalm 119:142 goes on to say, Thy law is truth. God's precepts, His statutes, His word, His commands – one and the same, are truth, not just the way we think of in something being true as in accuracy or consistency with fact or reality, but truth itself. Again, consider what man basis his truth on. Because of our imperfectness, our truths can change. Consider the many times you hear of a conviction of law and sentencing to be overturned as new facts are uncovered. God's truth is absolute, it is certain, it will never be found in error. It cannot deceive.

Truth <emeth> stability; certainty, trustworthiness: assuredly, establishment, faithful, right, sure, truth, verity.

Ps 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

Ps 119:151 Thou art near, O LORD, and all Thy commandments are truth.

Just as David learned to move towards God in adversity and looked to God for righteousness and truth, we have action to take. Look at how Jesus answered Pilate's question of Him before He was sentenced to crucifixion.

Joh 18:37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say [correctly] that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

God's truth, God's absolute and eternal justice is heard and understood by those He calls. **Are we moved to live according to what we know, even if we are not liked because of it?** David chose to continue to serve God and to remember God's word. He took encouragement in the righteousness and absolute truths of God's word. Read the encouragement of Paul's letter to the church in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 1.

2Th 1:6-12 For after all it is [only] just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and [to give] relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed. 11 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; 12 in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.