

**“The Realization of Righteous”**  
**Psalm 119:137-144**  
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**Background:**

This masterpiece of a chapter is known as an acrostic poem, meaning that each of the eight lines, or strophes, starts with the subsequent letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Saul-dee, which would be roughly equivalent to our “T” and “Z” combined, sounds like the word for righteousness, which is the theme of this passage.

In the period of the judges and the monarchy (that is, the establishment of the kingship), a shift seemed to occur as the emphasis in Scripture focused more on anointed leaders—heroes, if you will—set apart to protect and lead and deliver the nation. This is the period in which most of the Psalms were recorded, and therefore they have an underlying Messianic emphasis, an important contextual marker. In reading the Psalms, the original Jewish audience would have been looking for a champion to rule them. Ultimately, they would have been looking for the Messiah to rescue them.

**Key Points:**

**1. The Righteousness of the Lord/Word**

Definition of Righteous: It’s an adjective used to convey possession of an inherent quality of right-ness, not just a moment when someone wasn’t wrong, in a way that identifies the very nature of the one being described. Righteousness is something that is intrinsic.

Righteousness is morality that is in accordance with the divine—it has to do with God and his very being. He is always right, and he is always actively right. Righteousness is bound up in the very concept of God. A god that is wrong, shady, lacking, mistaken, or in any way compromised, is a fallen human.

God cannot err. He is the essence of all that is right and he can never *not* do right. In his being, he is truth, justice, holiness and righteousness.

Deuteronomy 32:4, “...all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Banish any belief that there could possibly be the slightest wrong in God, or that anything in him isn’t absolutely perfect and wholly flawless. If Yahweh is utterly righteous, then everything he has written must necessarily bear that same divine quality. That is why the Psalmist is so enamored with God’s word.

See the sighting of Calvary in this Psalm: Because of our willful departure from his standard, we are justly the objects of his righteous wrath. In light of that, listen to the magnanimous reversal the cross brought about... 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

God the Father made his only Son, his blameless Son, Jesus Christ to be our sin. That is the most scandalous statement. Jesus endured the hell-deserving judgment we had earned so that we could become his perfect righteousness. What an exchange! Our sin is credited to the Savior, and his righteousness is imputed to us.

Do you know what that means? Psalm 119:137 is not just true of God, but of all who have put their trust in the sacrifice of Calvary. “Righteous are you, O Lord,” but also, Righteous are you, O Christian; righteous are you, O Church—not in yourself, but only because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross for you and me.

## **2. The Righteousness of the Psalmist**

The conforming and transforming effects of the Lord’s righteousness on the Psalmist.

- a. He Defends the Righteousness of the Lord/Word (verse 139)
- b. He Depends on the Righteousness of the Lord/Word (verses 140, 141)
- c. He Delights in the Righteousness of the Lord/Word (verses 140, 143)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Psalm 119:137 declares that the Lord is righteous. Take time to meditate on what that means. What examples from Scripture show the justice, truthfulness, faithfulness and righteousness of God and his ways?
2. Why is it critical for the Christian to believe that God never errs? How will a firm belief in God’s right ways protect you when you walk through suffering?
3. Why is God’s righteousness “bad news” for those separated from God?
4. Review 2 Corinthians 5:21. What does this verse teach us about the exchange of righteousness God made at Calvary? What did Christ take? What did we receive? What does this mean for our standing before God? Why should this verse provide great peace and joy for us?
5. The Psalmist *defends, depends, and delights* in the Scriptures. How do we know this from the text? Who has been an example of any one of these characteristics to you? In which of these three areas do you most want and need to grow?