

Biblical Victory

Psalm 119

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Bible Text: Psalm 119:137-144
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This morning as you're being seated, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Psalm chapter 119. Psalm 119. Today, we're gonna begin in verse 137. If you're a guest with us, if you're a visitor with us, or maybe you haven't had the opportunity to worship with us in some time, I want to invite you to a very strategic study through what we know as the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 119 has 176 verses. It's divided into 22 what we might call subsections. But it has one very clear overarching theme that what we know as the scriptures, the Bible, that it should have and it should be the primary voice in our life.

Now, why would we study such a section? Well, two reasons. If you're a guest with us, you may not be aware, but we as a church family, we are challenging ourselves this year to memorize the totality of scripture. That's right, the entire Bible. Now, We're not doing it one person, so to speak, for the entirety. One of the things that we've done is we have reserved a respective chapter each and that being said, for those of you who were not here last week, the second portal is open. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, we've almost got every single one of the chapters reserved to be memorized this calendar year. There are a few that are left and if I were to be honest with you, they're not the most frequently studied, preached, or read chapters. But we've opened up the second portal and so maybe you've been sitting on the sidelines saying, "You know, I want to be a part of this, but I really want one of the gospels or Paul's letters." It is open now. Feel free to participate. We want any and all to take this year and as a priority to take a portion of scripture to meditate upon it, to memorize it and to make it a part of the fabric of your life.

But the second reason is because each and every week we gather and we study through Psalm 119, we discover that the Bible is not just a series of theological treatises. It's not just doctrines and teachings and such. We've discovered how practical its message is. And today we deal with the subject matter that we all long for. We all desire, this is one of those things that if we'd be honest with ourselves, we all want this in our life, but very rarely do we experience it. It's called victory. We want victory in life. We want to see the Lord move mightily in our lives. And so today, in Psalm 119, beginning in verse 137, we're going to study how is it that you and I can have confidence that God is going to bring victory. We're going to look at the conflict of what keeps us from victory, and then

we're going to finalize with what is the confirmation. that victory will be the Lord's. In verse 137, it says,

137 Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. 138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. 139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. 140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it. 141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts. 142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. 143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. 144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

When we talk about victory, when we talk about the Lord moving on and through our behalf, the first thing is that we've gotta have confidence. In fact, anybody who's had any experience in any type of competition, whatever it may be, particularly in the realm of sports, I would argue that half of the game plan is just believing that you can win. It doesn't matter how much talent you have. It doesn't matter how many, quote, four and five stars are on the rosters. If you don't have confidence that you can actually win the game, rarely if ever does talent supersede it.

That being said, what is the confidence that's laid out in this passage that the Lord desires to bring victory in our lives? Well, it begins with the "who." It declares in verse 137, "Righteous art thou, O LORD." In other words, the confidence isn't in what the scenario necessarily is, but who is behind and at the forefront of all of it. It says that God alone is righteous. In fact, you go to Isaiah chapter 45, it makes it very clear in verse 24 that if you and I were to somehow measure, quantify, or scale righteousness, there is nobody who even gets close to the Lord. In fact, when we begin to compare our righteousness with each other, all we're essentially doing is categorizing filthy rags. That's all we're doing.

The Lord is righteous and none is like him. In fact, in Zechariah chapter 14, it speaks of that famous event that we often classify as the Second Coming. The Bible says there's a day coming where the sky is going to open up, the Lord is going to descend. It's very specific. It says that he lands on Mount Zion and all those things initiate and they begin. But I want you to hear what Zechariah 14 says, it says that at that moment, at that point, the Lord of righteousness establishes righteousness. In other words, when we sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," our confidence is in the fact of who he is. He is the, quote, righteous one who desires to establish righteousness.

Now, what's the "what" here? It says in verse 138, "Thy testimonies that you have commanded." In other words, we discover, and this has been all through Psalm 119, that though the Lord is righteous, the way that he pronounces, the way he established his righteousness, and the way that today as we study he brings victory is through his word. Let me remind you, the Israelites in the Old Testament did 400 years in Egypt. They did 40 years in the wilderness. And in Joshua chapter 1, the Lord has them on the edge of

what we know as the Promised Land. Can we all concur that was victory right there? That's what they had been longing for. That's what they'd been desiring for. And on the edge of the Promised Land, what does the Lord say in Joshua 1? He says, "Just do what I tell you to do. Don't vary from it. Don't go sideways from it. It may not make sense. Others may not agree with it. Just step where I tell you to step."

You know, the very famous battle that occurred shortly thereafter is Jericho, a battle where the Lord told them to walk around the city once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. You know, one of the things that we discover about the victory that God brings, rarely does it look the way we want it to look and most oftentimes it doesn't happen in the time frame that we desire. Most of us say, "Well, victory is me doing what I want, when I want, the way I want." You know what God says about victory? "Just sit back, do what I tell you to do and watch this." And the walls of Jericho did what? Came crumbling down.

You make your way to the New Testament, and there's a little phrase tucked in Matthew chapter 1 verse 22. You may not have noticed it going through a Bible reading plan, but it talks about the birth of Jesus, the Christmas story, the Messiah. You know, the one that humanity had been longing for for thousands of years, praying for, preaching about. You know what it says in Matthew 1:22? Oh, sure he came of a virgin, sure he came just like the Old Testament said. It says in verse 22, he came according to the scriptures. Now that may not seem like much, but there's a whole lot there because we discover that the victory that God desires to see in your life and in my life does not come any other way than how he has prescribed it and how he has described it.

So our confidence is that he is the righteous one, his word is righteous and when fulfilled brings victory. Here's the big question: how do we implement this? I mean, how do we do this? And I love what verse 139 says, "My zeal hath consumed me." Can I speak Southernese for just a moment? I'm all in. That's what that means. When it says, "My zeal has consumed me," it means that I will not just play part-time this part-time that, I'll do it this way on that day, but another way... No, no, it means I'm all in.

And today I want to introduce a somewhat of a metric, so to speak, that you may or may never have heard of before. There's a man, historically speaking, one of the smartest men to ever walk on planet Earth, by the name of Blaise Pascal, mathematician of days gone by. What you may not know is that Pascal invented a methodology for testing faith, for testing decisions, and we call it Pascal's Wager. Now, we've got a display for you on the screen. You may never have seen this before, but this is kind of what he came up with hundreds of years ago and I'm going to deal with this on kind of a high level, and then we're going to get real practical with the subject matter here in Psalm 119. Here's what Pascal said. You've got two choices in life. You can either believe in God or not. As a result of that, God is either real or he is not. And so therefore, let's look at all the possibilities to that question. So today, if you claim, if you believe that God is real and he is real, then what happens? Everything in scripture is true, there is the blessing and the eternal joy and the everlasting life that he promises us through Jesus Christ, right? But what if today you say, "You know what? I just can't believe it. I can't believe God's real. I

don't believe the Bible's true and that whole thing about Jesus, it's just a fairy tale." If it's true, then what befalls you? Eternal suffering. Damnation. In fact, it makes a huge difference what you believe about God in the Bible based on whether it is true or not. Here's where it gets fascinating. Let's just say hypothetically, this is what Pascal did for the sake of an illustration, let's just say that none of it's true. Okay, now by the way, I believe it's all true, but this is a hypothetical. Say none of it's true. What do you see on that metric? There's no difference, is there? In other words, if you believe in God, you believe in the scriptures, and it's not true, you're in no different eternal position than somebody who denies it all.

Why is this critical? Because you and I today, for entertainment purposes, we lay wagers, do we not? How many times have you said, "Hey, I'll bet you dessert on that game"? Oh, come on, you may be Baptist, but you know you do it, it's okay. You know what Pascal said? That if you're to wager your life, if you're to wager your eternity, there's only one way to win and the only way to win is to believe that God said what he meant, and he meant what he said. Now I want to read for you the last line of his description, "Wager then, without hesitation, that he exists." You know what that means? Verse 139, "My zeal hath consumed me." In other words, when we talk about the victory that we desire God to bring, it isn't, hey, we pray for it on Sunday and we then try to figure it out on our own on Monday. No, no, no. When my zeal has consumed me, we're putting, can I say, we're putting all the eggs in one basket. Here is our confidence: that the victory that we so long for, the victory that God so desires to bring in our lives, only comes from completely jumping in and saying he said what he meant and he meant what he said.

So where's the conflict? Notice it says here at the end of verse 139, "my enemies have forgotten thy words." I would love to be able to tell you that the conflict, that the battle never happens in church, it always happens out there. But let me remind you that in Mark chapter 1, in the ministry of Jesus, the very first demon that he cast out was in the synagogue, what you and I might call, quote, church today. In other words, the place where the conflict takes place is anywhere where the word of God is not believed and just because you're in church doesn't mean you believe it. That being said, we discover in Ephesians chapter 6, our battle is not with flesh and blood, our battle is with principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. It is that which cannot be seen with the eye nor necessarily heard with the ear. So when we talk about victory, understand the battle that is raging is anywhere and anytime and with anybody who lives, subscribes, or promotes anything contrary to the word of God. That's the battle zone. That's the playing field and we cannot designate it by quote-unquote geographical positioning, which leans up the properties.

Notice what it says here. It says in verse 140, "Thy word," I love how the Bible says this. It's very pure. Now don't get me wrong, pure is pure, but very pure, I mean we're taking it to a whole new level here, right? In other words, in the midst of this conflict, in the midst of this battle, in the midst of this struggle, what does the book of Ephesians teach us in verse 17? The what we call the armor of God? There's only one offensive weapon. It says, take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Then you go to Hebrews chapter 4, what does it teach us about the word of God? It is sharper than any two-edged

sword. Let me share with you what that means. That means the properties of God's word, what does it do or what can it do in our lives? The first one is this, it can convict us like nothing else can. In fact, in Hebrews 4, it says it can separate the soul from the spirit like it does the bone from the marrow. In other words, we hear people's opinions, ideologies, philosophies, there is something about the word of God that brings conviction. That's why it's been said that the Bible will keep you from sin, but sin will keep you from the Bible. People who want to advocate a sinful life don't spend time in the Bible. Why? Because when you open up its pages, it reveals to you, you get this, God is righteous and you are not. God knows what he's doing and we don't. In other words, we discover very quickly, you ready for this revolutionary thought? I'm the problem. You're the problem.

But not only does the Bible have the property of conviction, you ready for this? It brings comfort. Have you read through the Psalms? David was a tormented man. He was tormented with those that wanted to end his physical life. He was tormented from those within the camp that tried to overthrow his rule. He was tormented by his thoughts. He had nights he couldn't sleep because of all that was happening in his life. And what does the word of God do? It brings us comfort like nothing else can.

So we talk about this conflict, the victory we so desire, I wish I could tell you just come to church when the doors open. There's no conflict there. Just because you're in church doesn't mean you believe the book, and by the way, there's a lot of folks in the office place, in the workplace, no matter where they are, they believe the book where they are and that's what we might call safe ground. But can I give you some perspective? Notice what he says in verse 141, "I am small and I'm despised." You ever felt that? You ever felt like when it comes to the things of this world, you're the only voice of reason? You feel like you're the only one according to what the Bible says and what it prescribes and what describes that that's in line with God and that everybody else for some reason seems contrary to? Here's the good news: Gideon showed up to a battle with 30,000 men and God said, "Nah, that's way too many. I think you need about 300." Can you imagine that? I want to put this in today's terminology. I want to imagine the first series of a football game and God saying, "Don't put 11 men out there, just put three. You'll be fine." Y'all would be losing your minds from the stands, right? You would immediately be calling for something we do all the time, "Buy him out. Get rid of him. We're done." God said, "No, I'm going to get the credit for this."

In the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3, there are seven churches that are spoken to by Jesus himself; it begins with Ephesus, ends with Laodicea. These churches have a host of scenarios and situations. Did you know that five of the seven have both quote good and bad. I mean, Ephesus was a great church, great doctrine, great teaching, making a huge difference in the community, but they lost their first love. You look at Laodicea at the end, they had great buildings and a huge budget, but according to verse 20, Jesus wasn't even a part of it. There are two churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that nothing negative or bad is spoken of. One of them is Philadelphia. Isn't it interesting? Philadelphia was the church that, according to Revelation 3, kept the word of God and never strayed from it. You keep the word of God in your life and you never have to worry about the condemnation of God. Do you know what the second one was? The church of Smyrna.

It's the second church in Revelation chapter 2. You go back and you read the description there beginning in verse 8. Here's what it'll tell you: they were small in number. They were being persecuted. They were being threatened. They were on the edge of losing their own life. They felt like they had no voice. Victory was not to be found in their lives. You know what the Lord said to him at the end? He said, "You are in the right place. You are in the right position. You are larger than you think. You're stronger than you think because you are on the right side."

You know, years and years and years ago, there was a lady in another state that was a part of the church that I had the privilege of pastoring. You ever heard the old phrase, somebody couldn't hear thunder? She couldn't hear a hydrogen bomb go off. I mean, nothing. This poor soul, I mean, it didn't matter how loud you screamed. It just didn't work. Well, one Sunday after church, I decided to have a conversation. Now, a conversation with this young lady was a loud conversation, and she could read lips at some level. And I asked her a very important series of questions. I said, "Ma'am," I said, "did you hear anything today?" "No." "Did you hear the music?" "No." "Did you hear the preaching?" "No." "You heard nothing?" "No." I said, "Why are you here then?" You ready for what she said? "I just want the Lord to know whose side I'm on." You know, sometimes in your battle, you're the only one but I've got news for you, if you're on the Lord's side according to his word, you're in the majority position and that is the perspective that he's given here, that when our zeal consumes us and we're all in on what God said, he said, even though they surround me.

So, here's the beautiful conclusion. Don't you want confirmation on this? I mean, seriously, if we're going to jump in with both feet, if we're really going to do it God's way and trust, that's the only way that real victory comes. Notice what it says in verse 142, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness without end." In other words, what we discover is that when it comes to having absolute confirmation that God is who he claims to be, does what he claims to do, and that it bodes us well to, quote, be on his side, it's just look at time. I mean, think about this for just a moment. All throughout time, the Lord has made it very clear what he expects of us and how we can be a part of the victory. How about the Garden of Eden? We decided to do it our own way and we lost that game pretty bad. You get to Genesis chapter 4, there's two brothers, one by the name of Cain, one by the name of Abel. According to Hebrews 11, Abel did the better sacrifice, and though he lost his life, he was actually victorious in that story. How about Noah, a preacher of righteousness? Millions of people on planet Earth, and the only people who listened to him were his own immediate family, and that was it. Think about Abraham. Goes to a land he knows not of. His own nephew thumbs his nose at him and says, Man, you have got to have lost your mind, old man." Do you see the pattern all throughout scripture? How about the disciples? The Apostle Paul, who stood before Agrippa and other leaders. You remember what the Roman leader said? "You've almost persuaded me."

See, there's a timelessness to the story and I've got news for you, you know that God has never changed his standard? Not once. Humanity goes with whatever direction the wind is. God has never changed his standard. It is, quote, timeless, his righteousness. And then

there is the testing. Verse 143, "Trouble and anguish have taken a hold of me." Do you realize that the very book that you hold in your hands, humanity has done everything they know to do over time to get rid of it? Over 50 countries right now make it illegal to possess it. And one of the great Bible translators of hundreds of years ago who died for the faith and died for scripture was so hated that after he died, they dug him up out of the ground and they burned. They burned him. The man was already dead. That is how much the scripture has been tested. It has been tried. There have been lawsuits that have been filed to discount it, but guess what? Over 25,000 archaeological discoveries have happened to prove that the people, the places, and the events, you guessed it, they happened just the way that God said and they mean exactly what he said.

But there's one last confirmation. Notice this last statement, "Give me understanding and I shall live." We're gonna get this real personal for just a moment. If there's one thing that we all will bar no expense for, it's called life. I've shared this statistic with you, it's absolutely true. The average one of us will spend about 80 to 85% of all the expenses we've ever spent on medicine and doctors and such the last six months of our life. Why? Because we love to hang on to life. We do everything we can to get life, to lengthen life, to attain a better life. We are fans of life. However, I think we all realize that the mortality rate for humanity is 100%. It's what it is.

Now here's the fascinating, not just confidence, not just the conflict, but the confirmation here. He says, "By all these things, God, I'm trusting victory. It may not look the way I want it to look. It may not come the time I want it to come, but I'm trusting." He says, "and I shall live." You know, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it makes this statement, if Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead, then our faith is in vain. And guess what? We're just like one of those boxes that Blaise Pascal talked about. Did you know, don't hurt me, but it's true, if Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead and his bones are sitting in a tomb in Israel right now, you can take that book in your hand and you can just dump it. You can get rid of it. Why? Because it hinges on the resurrection. It hinges on life.

From Genesis chapter 3 all the way to the end of the Bible, it says that the solution, the answer, the ultimate victory comes through Jesus Christ alone. There's coming a day, we talked about it earlier, there's coming a day where the sky is going to split and no matter what you believe, he is going to be victorious. His righteousness will be established. But here's the question: where are you going to be on that day? Are you going to be on the wrong side or are you going to be on the right side? See, the one thing that we desire victory over more than anything else is we want victory over death. We want victory that takes us past this life to the next. So what did Jesus Christ say? He said in John chapter 14, "Believe in God, believe also in me for in my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would tell you, I go to prepare a place for you." A man by the name of Thomas, I'll close with this, made this question. He said, "Jesus, how can we know?" He said, "I'm the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life. Nobody comes to the Father but by me." And when Jesus Christ walked out of that tomb, he allowed us to have victory over the one thing humanity cannot become victorious over on their own, and that is death itself. Why? Because God said it and he meant what he said. The question is, are you all in or not?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to the close of our service, you might be that person here in person, you might be online, you might be listening by way of radio, and just like we talked about the Bible being sharper than a two-edged sword, maybe today's that day where God took his Spirit and his word and in your life he did a surgical procedure. He showed you your great need for him. He showed you your unrighteousness compared to him. And maybe today's the day where you say, "You know what, it's time to be on the right side." The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It does not say whoever starts this and stops that. It doesn't say whoever becomes a Baptist or gets baptized. It doesn't say any of that stuff. It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord. Maybe today's the day that you call out for him to save you. You don't have to say what I would say. You don't have to read a quote, script. This is a heart's cry. But maybe your heart's cry would go a little something like this. "God, today I recognize, I believe, I understand that I'm a sinner. God, I've been places I should have never been. I've been a part of things I should have never participated in. God, you know the words that have come out of my mouth, the thoughts that have been between my ears, and your Bible rightfully says the wages of my sin is death. God, today I'm honest, I not only confess to what you already know about me, but I deserve what your Bible says about my future. It's what I deserve. But your word also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe I've got a sin problem that only leads to death but the only solution is Jesus Christ. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf, he lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe he died a sacrificial death to pay the price for my sin and, God, I believe that three days later, as we just spoke about, when he rose from the dead, he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I do not have all the answers to the struggles, the problems and the issues of this whole world, but I know I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. Best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe today's that day for the very first time that you cried out for Jesus to save you. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us. We're going to stand and sing together afterwards. And I just want to invite you just to step out and step forward. Wherever you are, I'll be here. We'll have others here. We would love to celebrate with you. We'd love to pray with you. We'd love to encourage you. Or maybe today you say, "Well, pastor, I'm already a believer but I would like to talk about that baptism thing." Or maybe today you say, "Pastor, I'd like to talk about what does it mean to be a part of the church?" We'd love to have those conversations with you. Or maybe you say, "You know what? Just going through the rough patch. I really could use somebody to pray with me and pray over me." Whatever the decision, whatever you need God to bring victory in your life over today, we just want to be a part of it.

Lord Jesus, thank you that even though we see nothing but defeat, even though we see nothing but despair, your word has made it very clear according to your word that you're a God of righteousness and you're a God of victory. So God, today I pray that we would trust you, whether it's victory over sin, whether it's victory over this dark world, whether

it's victory over our thoughts, whatever it may be, God, I pray today that we would trust you to bring the victory in our life that we so desperately desire. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.