

Does Psalm 143:2 really say No One Living is Righteous before God?

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Psalm 143:2 is the best proof-text the Augustinians have for their doctrine of Original Sin. It's really the only proof-text they have from the Hebrew Bible which I've found somewhat challenging to respond to. This is how Psalm 143:2 is commonly translated:

“Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.” (ESV)

Almost all translations translate it this way. But is this really a necessary translation or even the best translation? This translation I believe is translated by bias translators who are influenced by Augustinianism and think everyone is born with a sinful nature which forces everyone to sin and so everyone is just menstrual rags before God. But this translation contradicts the teaching of the entire rest of the Hebrew Bible. For example, it contradicts these texts which say:

“19.And He brought me out into a large place; He delivered me for He delighted in me. 18:20 יהוה rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He repaid me. 18:21 For I have guarded the ways of יהוה, And have not acted wrongly against my Elohim. 22.For all His right-rulings are before me, And I did not turn from His laws. 23.And I am **perfect before Him**, And I guard myself from my crookedness. 24.And יהוה repays me **according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes**. 25.With the lovingly-committed You show Yourself lovingly committed; With the perfect one You show Yourself perfect; 26.With the clean You show Yourself clean; And with the crooked You show Yourself twisted.” – Psalm 18 *ISR2009*

“1.And Iyob answered and said, 2.“Even today my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning. 3.If only I knew where to find Him, I would come to His dwelling-place! 4.**I would present my case**

before Him, and fill my mouth with proofs. 5.I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. 6.Would He contend with me in great power? No! But He would pay attention to me. 7.There the upright might reason with Him, and I would go safe forever from my Judge. 8. See, I go forward, but He is not; and backward, but I do not perceive Him; 9. to the left where He is working, but I do not see; He turns to the right, but I do not see. 10. For He knows the way that I take. **When He has tried me, I would come forth as gold.**” – Job 23 *ISR2009*

This is the translation I propose:

“And you should not enter into judgment with your servant, for all the living shall not **do justice** before you.” (*ABP*)

This translation is by the *Apostolic Bible Polyglot* of the Greek Septuagint Tanakh. What is interesting about this translation is that before I found it, I asked a friend of mine who has some knowledge of Hebrew about the Hebrew text of this passage and he said it seemed to him like the common translation is wrong and that it reads along the lines of “no one living does righteousness or justice before you.”¹ We know it cannot refer to righteousness because the Hebrew Bible says all over the place people are righteous before God, doing righteousness. But justice; if the meaning refers to justice, which seems to be the context of the verse, seeing as judgment is mentioned just before (in the same verse and in the previous one as well), then the intention might be perfect justice. Thus, the sense is: “Do not enter into judgment with me, a governing authority whom you have set up to judge my subjects under me, because no fallible human living before you judges every case perfectly always as you do, O Perfect Judge, seeing you know all things. Thus, be merciful to me in that you have put me in such a lofty place of judgment over the people, though I do not measure up to your ability to judge, for I am but a lowly man, mere flesh.”

¹ Some places in the Hebrew Bible where the words *tsadaq* and *tsedaqah* refer justice: Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 25:1; 2Samuel 15:4; Psalm 82:3; Job 8:3; Deuteronomy 33:21; 2Samuel 8:15; Isaiah 56:1.

We often make mistakes in our judgment of others due to ignorance (though we must strive to avoid this). This is something Yah Elohim is not liable to at all since he knows all, even the thoughts and intents of the heart:

“and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.” – Psalm 62:12 *ESV*

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.” – Ecclesiastes 12:14 *ESV*

“If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” – Proverbs 24:12 *ESV*

“9.The heart is deep beyond all things, and it is the man, and who can know him? 10. I the Lord try the hearts, and prove the reins, to give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruits of his devices.” – Jeremiah 17:9 *Brenton*

Something that I believe the anointed king of God, the son of David, will have help to do and not be liable at all to such flawed judgment due to a special miraculous help from the spirit of God:

“1.There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2.**And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge** and the fear of the LORD. 3.And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. **He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4.but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;** and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5.Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. 6.The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and

the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.” – Isaiah 11 *ESV*

So we need not accept the view of the followers of Augustine in respect to this text. We need not with this one poorly translated text undo the teaching of the whole sweep of the rest of the Hebrew Bible.