

## **“Encouragement in Affliction”**

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Scriptural Foundation: Psalm 119:65-80, ESV

### **Teth**

<sup>65</sup>You have dealt well with your servant,  
O LORD, according to your word.  
<sup>66</sup>Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
for I believe in your commandments.  
<sup>67</sup>Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
but now I keep your word.  
<sup>68</sup>You are good and do good;  
teach me your statutes.  
<sup>69</sup>The insolent smear me with lies,  
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;  
<sup>70</sup>their heart is unfeeling like fat,  
but I delight in your law.  
<sup>71</sup>It is good for me that I was afflicted,  
that I might learn your statutes.  
<sup>72</sup>The law of your mouth is better to me  
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

### **Yodh**

<sup>73</sup>Your hands have made and fashioned me;  
give me understanding that I may learn your  
commandments.  
<sup>74</sup>Those who fear you shall see me and  
rejoice,  
because I have hoped in your word.  
<sup>75</sup>I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous,  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.  
<sup>76</sup>Let your steadfast love comfort me  
according to your promise to your servant.  
<sup>77</sup>Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;  
for your law is my delight.  
<sup>78</sup>Let the insolent be put to shame,  
because they have wronged me with falsehood;  
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.  
<sup>79</sup>Let those who fear you turn to me,  
that they may know your testimonies.  
<sup>80</sup>May my heart be blameless in your statutes,  
that I may not be put to shame!

Jackie was a little girl, twelve years old, when I first met her and her family at Bethany Baptist Church. I had the joy of watching Jackie grow, both physically and spiritually, as she graduated from high school, from college, and seven years ago she was married and had two little boys. There are great joys which come from pasturing the same church for a long period of time, and one of them is seeing these wonderful life transitions; being able to watch these kinds of blessings God brings.

Jackie now lives in Florida and this past October the Lord saw fit to take her husband home to Heaven by way of an automobile accident. This past December I received one of those Christmas letters we often receive from young families. Many of them tell about soccer, grades in school, and piano lessons. Jackie's letter, this year, was different.

Her letter was one of the most profound letters I have ever read. I want to share with you this one page, single-spaced letter. I have attempted to remove some things which are extraneous, but I believe almost every line is important. She begins, "Dear friends, is it possible to have so much to say you cannot say anything at all? That is how I am feeling as I write this letter. Where do I begin?"

"I think it is best to start on October 11, 2010. As you know, that is the day my world changed forever. As far as I knew, it was just an ordinary Monday for our family. We went about our morning routine like any other day. A quick kiss good-bye and we were on our separate ways, just like normal. Only this time we would not be returning to 'normal'. While the boys and I have returned to our earthly home, our beloved husband and father has begun his life in his Heavenly Home. Our lives will never be the same and we are left heart-broken.

"As I reflect upon the last seven years spent with my JW I cannot help but smile. He was such a blessing to me. I know I am a better person for having him in my life and one of my fondest memories of him is hearing him say, 'I love you'. Not a day past when he did not say that at least a dozen times. I have come to cherish those words, especially as my sweet Jayden says them. He must miss hearing his Daddy say it to because I still hear those words nearly a dozen times a day. Like father, like son.

“I know the question on everyone’s mind is: How are you and the boys really doing? Obviously the past two months have been very difficult, but we have survived. Jayden and Jackson are definitely trying to express grief in their own ways, and I am pleased to say I am able to stay at home for the remainder of the school year. We need this time to grieve together.

“The Lord has blessed us in so many ways in the little time since the accident. I praise Him everyday for my two beautiful boys. I could have lost them, too. They were in the accident with their father. Instead, they are daily reminders of the wonderful life we shared with their Daddy. We do miss him immensely, but we are taking comfort in knowing God is control. He did not make a mistake on that Monday morning, nor was He surprised by what happened.

“When I was born twenty-nine years ago, He knew this day would come and because of this we can rest in His mighty hands, knowing He is also guiding our future. Psalm 13 has become my new life-passage. Verses 5 and 6 say, ‘But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.’ I truly believe that. He has been good to us.”

Jackie then writes thanks to family and friends who supported her during her loss, and she finishes her letter by writing, “As this Christmas season is upon us, I pray God will bless you abundantly as you have been a blessing to our family. Without the Lord’s strength it would be impossible for me to say this last part. From the bottom of my heart I want to wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Love, Jackie, Jayden, and Jackson Pope.”

What a profound testimony of living faith in the face of immense heartache and trial. What a demonstration of the sufficiency of God’s grace in every circumstance. Jackie’s letter elevated my thoughts above the brokenness of this world and to the wholeness of God’s sovereign grace available to His people. Jackie does not respond this way to this trial because she is an amazingly strong person. She would acknowledge her many weaknesses, but her heart is able to keep its’ song, in the midst of tragedy, because she clings to faith in the Living God.

This is the theme of Psalm 119 and our text. The psalmist wrote this entire psalm, and we do not know exactly who wrote it, whether it was David or some others have been suggested, while under serious affliction. If we casually look through Psalm 119, we would see,

<sup>23</sup> Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes.

Further, we read,

<sup>61</sup> Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.

<sup>95</sup> The wicked lie in wait to destroy me...

<sup>110</sup> The wicked have laid a snare for me...

<sup>143</sup> Trouble and anguish have found me...

The psalmist is writing under a time of trouble and anguish, when enemies are after him to destroy him and hurt him. He addresses this theme of affliction, particularly in these sixteen verses of our text. The central idea he is presenting to us is: God is good; He is really good! We must not let tragedy, trial, hardship, and affliction move us from the rock of the goodness of God. God will meet us in the face of duress. We, as believers in Christ, can hold onto Christ in the face of our affliction and find God in His sufficiency to sustain us in the midst of our sorrow. That is the Gospel truth.

We will consider the rule which is presented: God does all things well. Second, we will consider requests which are petitioned: We need to petition God in times of affliction. Third, we will consider the result provided: God produces hope in the life of the afflicted.

The rule we will look at is: God does all things well,

<sup>65</sup> You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.

Here is the psalmist, under extreme duress and difficulty, yet he says, “LORD, you have dealt well with your servant.” He refuses to hold onto a complaining spirit. The psalmist is reviewing his life and he announces God has been good to him all the time.

I love the chorus,

“God is good all the time  
He put a song of praise in this heart of mine  
God is good all the time  
Through the darkest night, His light will shine  
God is good, God is good all the time”<sup>1</sup>

Though affliction cuts us deeply and brings us searing pain, so hot we could not possibly, previously imagine such pain, affliction cannot steal our song when we root ourselves in this truth: God is good and He does all things well.

There is a qualification the psalmist presents: He deals with “your servant” and those who have connected themselves to Him through faith with a humble, heart, with a repentant heart, and with a believing heart.

It is only those who are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ who can claim this promise from God. The first issue in life is to ask the questions: Am I a servant of God? Am I related rightly to Him through faith in His Son?

Notice the last four words of our verse, “according to your word.” God’s good dealings are attached to the conditions He reveals in His Word; conditions of faith, humility, and reception of His Son and of His promise. The psalmist is saying, “I submit my life to you and I believe in you. Though affliction presses hard against my soul, yet I acknowledge you have been good to me. You have brought your life to me. You have dealt with me according to the promises you have revealed in your Word. You have not broken any of your promises in the midst of my trial. I can count upon you to be absolutely consistent with what you have revealed in your Word.”

God, in His Word, does not tell us we will not have affliction. That is not according to the promise of His Word. If we expect that, we are expecting something God never said. We can expect God to be absolutely faithful to everything He does say.

This general rule provides a foundation for us when we go through trials of various kinds. We do not have to wonder whether God has changed when our circumstances change or whether God has become someone else in the midst of our suffering. As believers we resolve by faith not to let circumstances bring doubt into our soul regarding the goodness of God. Someone once said, “Do not doubt in the dark what you know to be true in the light.” In the midst of the light and pleasant circumstances, we ought to say, “I know God is good.” Let us not doubt in the darkness of our trial what we absolutely know to be true in the light. God is the God who gives grace upon grace to those who trust in Him.

How can the psalmist say God has dealt well with him when he has princes who are conspiring against him and when trouble and anguish find him? Skeptics have long used tragedies and pain to question this basic rule regarding God’s goodness. Reporter Martin Bashir recently interviewed a religious leader on MSNBC and he began that interview by saying this, “Just help us with this tragedy in Japan,” as he is pointing to something immensely painful and full of suffering, “which of these is true: either God is all-powerful but He does not care about the people of Japan, or He does care about the people of Japan but He is not all powerful? Which is it?” That is the question of a skeptic.

Martin Bashir and the religious leader both failed to understand this question presents a false dilemma for there is a third option: God is immeasurable in His goodness and He is infinite in His power, but He is directed by His infinite wisdom which is not ours and is above ours and is different from ours. God’s goodness is according to His Word. That is to say, His goodness is not defined by temporal and faulty perceptions we hold, but by His eternal and perfect wisdom. God knows best and we can trust Him even when we do not understand Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Don Moen, *God Will Make A Way: The Best Of Don Moen*, 2003

In His Word, God says He holds our ultimate good in view. Our ultimate good does not include absolute freedom from temporal suffering. That is hard for us, because in my own wisdom I would say, the best thing for me is not to suffer, but that is not God's wisdom. God, in His wisdom, tells us He works through our suffering to bring about an eternal blessing because He has eternity in view. He demonstrated this truth through the death of His own Son.

God is never the author of evil but He uses evil and suffering to accomplish His good purpose. When He sent His Son to the cross and ordained for evil men to use their wickedness to conspire against Him and bring Him to a cross, He was working through a temporal pain and suffering for an eternal glory. What was true for Jesus now becomes true for us when we attach ourselves to Him.

In this psalm we understand God does not make the wicked persecute the psalmist, but God uses the wicked actions of these princes and others who are conspiring against him for His kind and benevolent purpose for His servant. Often times the goodness of God is not understood or practically experienced by us until long after the painful events are over. We look back and we understand some of the dealings of God, but let us not suspect His goodness as a result of our lack of wisdom. God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.<sup>2</sup> Let us know God is actively at work dealing out His goodness even in the context of extreme trouble.

The classic example of this is Joseph, in the Old Testament. Joseph was severely afflicted, according to God's Word. Remember how his brothers conspired against him and sold him into slavery into Egypt.<sup>3</sup> While in Egypt, he gained some blessing as he became a servant in the household of Potiphar and Potiphar showed him favor. Then Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of rape and he was sent into a dark and stinky dungeon where he languished for years.<sup>4</sup> Finally, he was set free and became a trusted advisor to Pharaoh.<sup>5</sup> Then he met us with the very brothers who sold him into slavery and who set this trial, hardship, and affliction in motion upon him.<sup>6</sup> He could have taken revenge upon them. In fact, that is what they thought he was going to do, but we remember Joseph's perception about life and God's goodness through all of that. He said to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me." That was the truth because they wanted to harm and hurt him, but then he said, "God meant it for good to bring about many people should be kept alive as they are today. Do not fear, I am going to provide for you and your little ones."<sup>7</sup> He comforted them and he spoke kindly to them.

Understand, Joseph did not say, "God passively allowed these things to happen," but he said, "God meant it and is active even in this affliction." He uses the same word "meant" for God's actions as he uses it for his brother's actions. As active as his brothers were in this evil of selling Joseph into slavery, God was active. He is not the author of evil, but He is using the wicked actions of wicked brothers and He is ordering and ordaining it for God's glory and for Joseph's good. This is the way God works and this is the reason why the psalmist has this perspective as he has studied the Scriptures and he has come to know God in this way, when he says, "You have dealt well with your servant, even in hardship."

There are two requests the psalmist will make in the midst of affliction and I believe these are requests we need to learn to make as well. We need to petition God in the times of affliction and the first petition the psalmist makes is: Teach me. I need to learn some things about you and about your purposes. Teach me in my affliction.

We do not naturally respond to affliction with joy and peace. Our first reaction to grave hardship is anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, and despair. The condition of our heart will determine our attitude toward God in trial and that is one of the reasons we need to petition God. We do not have the resources within ourselves to respond to trials in this way. We say, "Lord, teach me."

We read, from our text,

<sup>69</sup> The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; <sup>70</sup> their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law.

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 55:8

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 37:12-28

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 39

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 41:41-44

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 42:6-8

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 45:3-11

The psalmist is describing a person who does not believe God to be good. Notice the condition of natural man's heart in Verse 70. The natural man's heart is thick and made of stuff which has not spiritual sensitivity. It is full of pride so it does not receive God's Word. That is what the natural heart is like. God's revelation comes to the heart of this wicked person, whose heart is unfeeling like "fat" and rather than receiving it and saying, "This is truth I need for my life. I will submit to it and I will live it out," God's truth and revelation bounces off of them, especially in times of painful trial.

Let us keep our hearts lean, sensitive, and soft to God. Our joy and our peace will not be stolen from us if we do. We need God's grace to keep us soft and that is the reason why we petition the Lord, "Teach us!" It is right to pray and ask God to help us to have right-heart attitudes. That is what the psalmist does in Verse 66.

There are two things he asks for: good judgment and knowledge. He needs spiritual discernment to view his circumstances as the Lord views them. He needs knowledge of who the Lord is so he can apply that knowledge to any particular circumstance in life.

It is not wrong to pray, in the midst of affliction, God would deliver us from affliction. That is a good prayer. Later in this psalm, he prays,

<sup>153</sup> Look on my affliction and deliver me...

It is not wrong, when we pray to God, to pray, "Lord, deliver me from this affliction." But, it is right for us to sometimes recognize God will not deliver us because that is not His intended plan, and then our prayer should be, "Lord, teach me!"

He asks for God to instruct his heart so he would have good judgment and discernment about God's purposes, God's involvement, and God's character in the midst of this. He realize he will loose the benefit of this affliction and it will not become a help to him if he does not have good judgment and knowledge. Without knowledge and good judgment his pain will be wasted.

He also recognizes God is so far wiser than he is and God has a storehouse of wisdom He is willing to give him as one of His children. God's wisdom is stored up in His Word, but often times, in the midst of trials, the words of the page seem to bounce back without meaning and we need God to open our eyes to see wonderful things out of His Law, especially in times of trials.

Our thoughts become so inadequate and small in reference to God, so when we are confronted by these deep questions suffering brings us, we need to ask God to impart wisdom. That is what James' whole message is, when he says,

<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness... <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God...

God loves to give wisdom to His peoples. When we are going through trials, count it all joy, and the only way we can count it all joy is by asking God for the wisdom to have spiritual perception, judgment, and discernment in regard to the circumstances of our life and what God is doing so we might value God's precious gifts to us in our trials and embrace them, rather than push them away.

God will give us wisdom. That is what He does. Trials can confuse us and lead us to all kinds of wrong ideas about God and His will for us. Trials, in and of themselves, do not produce this endurance, this hope, and this faith which are precious and pure. Trials, in fact, can bring about greater spiritual to our soul, more fear, more unbelief, and more selfishness. That is the reason we ask God, "Lord, teach me!" The first response of a believer in the midst of affliction is, "Lord, teach me for I recognize my greatest need is for wisdom and to value the things you value, Lord, because those things are truly valuable and eternally valuable; to know how to endure this trial and to know how, Lord, you will redeem it for your glory and for our joy."

Our pain often blinds us to God and to His perfection and our minds become easily muddled in regard to His person. We can become tempted, in the midst of affliction, to point our fingers at God and say, "God, you are not good! You

are not doing right!” Instead of giving ourselves over to anger at God, we are wise to get on our knees and say, “God, you are wise and you are good. Would you teach me because I am not understanding right now? Would you help me?” God delights to help us.

I like the last few words in Verse 66: “...teach me good judgment for I believe in your commandments.” He has rooted his faith in the revelation God has given him in His Word and not in his emotions or his counsel or the opinions of other people around him. That is often where we get our “truth”, especially when we are under affliction. We get our truth by our own thoughts, emotions, and people around us. The psalmist knows the place where he will find God’s wisdom and be taught by God’s Holy Spirit.

The application is: If we turn from God’s Word in our trial, we set aside the medicine which will bring healing to our hurting soul and we will miss out on God’s wisdom which will be able to enable us to benefit from our hurt.

Sometimes, in the midst of trials, and I know what my flesh often says, we shut the Bible and we do not feel like reading it; “God, you have brought about a circumstance which is painful and I do not like it.” That is the very thing which will shut us off from the very thing we need. We must confront our own flesh and say, “No, that is not the response I am going to have. I am going to say, ‘Lord, would you teach me for I believe in your commandments. In faith, even though my emotions do not feel like opening up your Word, I believe you have wisdom for me and wisdom I need which will help me.’”

There are several principles the psalmist identifies. First, God uses affliction to protect us from spiritual corruption and to give us spiritual glory, as we read from our text,

<sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word...<sup>71</sup> It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

I believe these verses reveal some of the answer to the prayer in Verse 66: Teach me! Affliction benefitted the psalmist in many ways and he knew it. He is not necessarily saying he is a person who has given himself over to reckless living and sinful choices, but he is saying, “Lord, I recognize, while I believe and a worshipper I was beginning to stray from obedience, devotion, and the intensity of love and worship. I was wondering. Affliction came and freed me from the bonds of this temptation and it sweetened my walk with you. I came to understand, more, how vital you are to every breath I take.”

God often will use affliction to sharpen our eternal focus so we live for eternity and not for this temporal realm. Can we say with the psalmist, “It was good for me I was afflicted that I might learn your statutes.” God wants to give us such good gifts and He often will bring to us afflictions for a redemptive purpose. The knife which wounds us is the scalpel of a Surgeon and not the switchblade of a thief.

The second principle is: God uses affliction to help us enjoy more of His perfection. The more of God we know in our affliction the more we will trust Him, the more we will rest in Him, the more we will enjoy Him, and the more we will delight in Him. Affliction does not unnerve the person who knows God. That is Jackie’s testimony, but what affliction does is to draw us nearer to the One whom we know is our Comforter and our Source of strength.

Notice the attributes of God the psalmist is focusing upon and which become clearer as a result of his adversity, as we read,

<sup>68</sup> You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

First, there is the goodness of God then there is the wisdom of God, recognizing he needs to have God teach him and help him in his affliction. Further, we read,

<sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

God is not capable of wrong-doing. He is holy righteous. He is looking at the goodness of God, the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, the faithfulness of God, and the sovereignty of God. God is in charge of this world and these hurts and acts of violence done against him by wicked men are not arbitrary and independent of God's sovereign control, but God is moving in them, mysteriously to be sure, but nonetheless, God is in charge.

Then, we read,

<sup>76</sup>Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.

It is God's loving kindness which is in view now. As we make a list of the attributes of God the psalmist is meditating upon, we find it is God's goodness, God's wisdom, God's righteousness, God's faithfulness, God's sovereign power, and God's love. He bundles them all up and puts them in his arms and says, "Each one of these are precious and, at this time, I am going to hold onto every aspect which is true of you, Lord, and not loose one of them."

John Newton said, "If it were possible for me to alter any part of God's plan, I would spoil it." That is a statement from a person who gathers all of these attributes of God and who looks at how God is working in our lives, and he says, "As a result of God's sovereign power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and loving kindness, if this is the God I know, as I look at the way God is working in my life, if I would alter any of that plan, I would spoil the very plan God, in His righteousness, wisdom, goodness, love, and sovereign power has for me to enjoy."

Friday afternoon my wife, Kimberly, began to experience some tightness in her chest. We had been studying this passage all through the week and she got short of breath. I asked, "This is a strange symptom. Do you want to go to the hospital?" She answered, "No, no." About two-thirty in the morning she awoke and was experiencing this even more. I said, "We are going to the hospital," and we got into the car and went to the hospital. They began to do all the tests for her heart. They took her for a CAT scan and my mind, as she was away and I was wondering what was going in, came to this verse of our text,

<sup>68</sup> You are good and do good; teach me your statutes... <sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. <sup>76</sup> Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise...

As I read these verses, I thought, "Lord, please help my Kimberly. I know you are good and wise and faithful and sovereign and loving." It was as though the attributes of God were washing over my soul, bringing calm, comfort, and strength. "Lord, you can change your plan, if you desire, but, Lord, you have something for us in this we do not want to miss, so, Lord, please teach us."

I am so thankful for God's Word because that would not have been my natural way of thinking. If I did not have God's Word opened in the hospital that would not have been the way I would have experienced that trial. It did turn out, Kimberly was fine. They gave her some medicine to help her. I am thankful God delivered us from that affliction. I am thankful there was not something which would have been lasting, but how wonderful it is to know God meets us, not after the affliction is over but He meets us right in the midst of it

The second request is: Comfort me in my affliction, as we read,

<sup>76</sup> Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. <sup>77</sup> Let your mercy come to me...

We do need God to teach us so we would receive the benefit He intends for us, but we also need a tender hand of comfort. We need a hug! We need God to minister to our suffering souls. Is it not great to know we have a Good Shepherd who does exactly that? David will write, in Psalm 23,

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of<sup>9</sup> the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

O, that we would learn sooner to cast our cares upon the God of all comfort. God invites us to call, “Comfort me,” and to cast our cares upon Him. Peter writes, in 1 Peter,

<sup>7</sup> ...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Do you know God cares for you specifically? Do you know His care is constant and not sporadic? Do you know His care is total; even the very hairs of our heads are numbered? Do you know His care is unlimited and there is no resource He cannot provide for us?

One pastor notes, in commenting upon this verse, “The figurative expression ‘cast’ is not lay, but cast. It seems to intimate the duty enjoined is one which requires effort and experience tells us it is not a easy matter to throw off the burden of our cares.” Is that not true? Sometimes we think cast means “to lay”. It is hard to take our care and cast it off of ourselves and put it on the Lord, but that is what we are to do. We are to take that vigorous, intentioned effort to take our care and cast it to the Lord.

The illustration is thought of is, if you are hiking along a mountain trail and there is a beautiful lake below, in the valley, and you slip and tumble down and splash into the water. The lake is deep. What is the first thing you need to do? You need to cast that burden off of you because that burden will cause you to go to the bottom of the lake. You may find that might be hard, but you must do it.

When we cast off a care, we will have someone to receive it and take us to safely. We have One who cares for us.

From our text, we read,

<sup>76</sup> Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. <sup>77</sup> Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.

This is the promise of God’s Word. The psalmist is always pointing us back to God’s Word so we will receive comfort. That is the way we cast our cares, by claiming His promises.

The last issue is the result: God produces hope in the life of the believer. Though pain and difficulty hounded the psalmist, listen to his outlook upon life,

<sup>72</sup> The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

He is saying that in the midst of affliction, “This is so fresh! This is good stuff! This is what I need! Money will not solve my problem of pain, anxiety, fear, and difficulty, but your Word does.”

<sup>73</sup> Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. <sup>74</sup> Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word.

The psalmist is saying, “Other godly friends who look at my plight and the affliction I am enduring, rejoice because they see hope and not darkness. They do not see a person without a song. They see a person who has a song in their heart, even in the midst of great difficulty, because I have hoped in your Word.”

We loose heart when we look only at our problems and at our pains, but God says, “Do not look at the circumstances which are temporal, but eyes of faith look into my promises. Things of this world are temporary, but the things I have for you, my Word, are eternal. Cling onto them. Walk by faith and not by sight.” Faith is not a generic faith, but it is a faith in the God who has revealed Himself in His Word.

Notice how this portion of Psalm 119 closes,

<sup>80</sup> May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!



The psalmist is talking about a shame which will be experienced in the Last Day by those who stand before God with sin and guilt attached, who have not received grace from this God who offers grace. This is a blamelessness which comes not from a perfect life, but it is a blamelessness which comes from a person who receives God's grace, His forgiveness, and His righteousness through Christ.

As we think about the God who ordains our suffering to bless us, let us remember He is the God who ordained suffering for Himself and for His Son so He might bless us yet more. He sent His Son Jesus into this world to die upon a cross, to take our sins upon Himself, and to suffer in an unimaginable way so we might be blessed with the forgiveness of sin, so we might not be ashamed on that last day, and so Jesus would be glorified and every knee would bow and every tongue would confess.<sup>8</sup>

Do you know Jesus? Are you ready to stand before Him? Do you know on that day you will not stand ashamed because you have an Advocate and a Savior who will be standing with you? I encourage you, if you have already trusted in Jesus, in the midst of affliction, know God cares for you and He will meet you in His Word by His Spirit. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you.<sup>9</sup> He is a God who is the God of all comfort. What a joy it is to have Him!

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<sup>8</sup> Philippians 2:10, 11

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 31:6