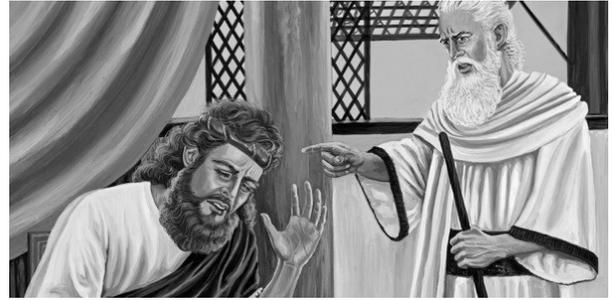


THE BLESSING OF AFFLICTION!

“Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word. Thou art good, and doest good; teach me Thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in Thy law. **It is good for me that I have been afflicted;** that I might learn Thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Psalms 119:65-72).



Introduction

1. When you think about the word “affliction”, what comes to your mind? Actually you might be surprised at the wide range of ideas people have in regards to their definition of this word. But perhaps everyone would agree that any kind of affliction would be unpleasant and undesirable.
2. You may have seen the highlighted words of David – “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” – and wondered how affliction could be good for anyone! It seems to run contrary to human experience.
3. In this lesson, we shall consider the following questions: How could affliction be considered a good thing? What kind of affliction was David talking about?

1. WHAT IS AFFLICTION?

In this context, the term *affliction* here refers to the discipline that comes from the word of God.

a. The word “affliction” is from the Hebrew word *’ānāh*.

- 1) “A verb indicating to **be afflicted**, to **be oppressed**, to **be humbled**. It refers to being oppressed, in a state of oppression. It means to bow down, to humble oneself, to be humbled (Exodus 10:3; Isaiah 58:10). In some senses of the verb, it means to inflict oppression, to subdue, to humble someone: of Israel's oppression in Egypt (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 1:11-12); to deal with persons harshly, to oppress them (Genesis 16:6); to humble a woman (Deuteronomy 21:14); to afflict, humble oneself (Genesis 16:9; Leviticus 16:29; Psalms 132:1). It is used of raping a woman (Genesis 34:2). It is possible to humble oneself, to afflict oneself by fasting (Ezra 8:21; Daniel 10:12). The psalmist was often disciplined by affliction from God (Psalms 119:71); the Suffering Servant of Isaiah was afflicted by the Lord (Isaiah 53:4)” (CWSD).
- 2) **Total Occurrences:** 83 **Translated:** **afflict** (29 x) Genesis 15:13; 31:50; Exodus 1:11; 22:22-23 (2); Leviticus 16:29; 16:31; 23:27; 23:32; Numbers 24:24 (2); 29:7; 30:13; Judges 16:5-6 (2); 16:19; 2 Samuel 7:10; 1 Kings 11:39; 2 Chronicles 6:26; Ezra 8:21; Job 37:23; Psalms 55:19; 89:22; Isaiah 58:5 (2); 64:12; Lamentations 3:33; Nahum 1:12; Zephaniah 3:19. **afflicted** (21 x) Exodus 1:12; Leviticus 23:29; Deuteronomy 26:6; 1 Kings 2:26 (2); 2 Kings 17:20; Job 30:11; Psalms 88:7; 90:15; 107:17; 116:10; 119:67, 71, 75, 107; Isaiah 53:4; 53:7; 58:3; 58:10; 60:14; Nahum 1:12. **humbled** (7 x) Deuteronomy 8:3; 21:14; 22:24; 22:29; Psalms 35:13; Ezekiel 22:10-11 (2). **forced** (4 x) Judges 20:5; 2 Samuel 13:14, 22, 32. **humble** (4 x) Exodus 10:3; Deuteronomy 8:2; 8:16; Judges 19:24. **exercised** (2 x) Ecclesiastes 1:13; 3:10. **sing** (2 x) Exodus 32:18; Isaiah 27:2. **abase** (1 x) Isaiah 31:4. **afflict** (1 x) 1 Kings 8:35. **afflictions** (1 x) Psalms 132:1. **chasten** (1 x) Daniel 10:12. **defiled** (1 x) Genesis 34:2. **force** (1 x) 2 Samuel 13:12. **gentleness** (1 x) 2 Samuel 22:36. **hardly** (1 x) Genesis 16:6. **hurt** (1 x) Psalms 105:18. **ravished** (1 x) Lamentations 5:11. **submit** (1 x) Genesis 16:9. **troubled** (1 x) Zechariah 10:2. **weakened** (1 x) Psalms 102:23. **wise** (1 x) Exodus 22:23 (2).
- 3) As you can see, there are many ways in which the word *anah* can be used. The meaning, then, must be determined by the context. The term *anah* carries with it the idea of being humbled (put to shame); it is from a root word meaning browbeating, i.e., a verbal attack (Strong's). Since this term is found in a psalm that has the word of God as its overall theme, I believe ***affliction* here refers to the discipline that comes from the word of God.**

- b. There was a time in David's life when he received this type of *affliction*. A while after committing adultery with Bathsheba and then having her husband murdered, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront and convict him of his sin: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon" (2 Samuel 12:9). Indeed, David felt the sting of the prophet's words and confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). **The word of God delivered by the prophet corrected him of his sin.**
- c. The word of God corrects us in the same way today.
- 1) The evangelist Timothy was commanded, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke**, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).
 - 2) Titus was instructed, "These things speak, and exhort, and **rebuke** with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15). The "things" to which Paul refers were the instructions that came from God (Titus 2:11-12).
 - 3) The church in Laodicea was in a bad way, spiritually, and was subject to the Lord's correction. The Lord said to them, "**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten**: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). **The discipline and call to repentance came through the word of God. The same is true today.**

2. WHAT IS THE AIM OF AFFLICTION?

The aim of the affliction that comes through the word of God is repentance.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word" (Psalms 119:67).

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalms 119:71).

- a. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, and desires that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). So when the Lord sees one of His loved ones go astray, He disciplines them to turn them back to Himself (Revelation 3:19). All sin is deadly. Indeed, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). A Christian that continues in sin and does not repent is left with "a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27).
- b. David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word" (Psalms 119:67). It may seem obvious, but affliction (i.e., discipline from the Lord) comes *after* we sin, not before. Have you ever had a preacher make you feel guilty even when you haven't done anything?
- 1) Well anyway, in the scriptures preaching and teaching was both instructive and corrective:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort** with all longsuffering and **doctrine**" (2 Timothy 4:2).
 - 2) Before sin is committed, we ought to be encouraged or exhorted (Hebrews 10:24). It is after sin is committed that we must be rebuked, reprovved, corrected (Luke 17:3).
- c. The ultimate aim or goal of affliction, discipline and correction by the word is *repentance*.
- 1) Discipline is meant to bring us to repentance. Notice carefully what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "**For though I made you sorrowful with a letter**, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that **ye sorrowed to repentance**: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing" (2 Corinthians 7:8-9).

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8-9).

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

- 2) Discipline is meant to bring one back to obedience. David said: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but **now I keep Your word**” (Psalms 119:67). If we love God, then this will be manifested in keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3).
- 3) Discipline is meant to lead one into a deeper understanding of God’s word. David said: “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may **learn Your statutes**” (Psalms 119:71). Indeed, we are to “grow in grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). The discipline or affliction that comes from God’s word is designed to keep us on the right track.

3. WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS GOOD AND DOES GOOD?

God is the definition of Good. It is in believing this that fills us with the *absolute* confidence that His discipline of us is *always* for our good.

“Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word” (Psalms 119:65).

“Thou art good, and doest good; teach me Thy statutes” (Psalms 119:68).

- a. A rich young man came to Jesus, saying, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). Jesus challenged him to think through the implications of ascribing to Him the title “good”, saying, “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God” (Mark 10:18). Since only God is intrinsically good, was this young man prepared to acknowledge Jesus’ deity? My point, though, is that God is good, not because He fits the definition of good, but because He *is* the definition of goodness.
- b. “God is good and does good” (Psalms 119:68). Indeed, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Now here’s the point: **the good that God does includes the discipline of His children**: “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Hebrews 12:5-6). Further, whereas the discipline of earthly fathers may be administered arbitrarily, or from caprice, or under the influence of passion, our heavenly Father’s discipline is always for our good; it is good because of the end result – training in righteousness (cp. 2 Timothy 3:16).

“For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:10-11).
- c. If our earthly fathers have disciplined us, then should we not expect our heavenly Father to discipline us? Let us be careful... “Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him”. God disciplines us because (i) He loves us, and (ii) for our good (Hebrews 12:5-6, 10). The preaching and teaching that comes from the word of God is *always* for our good; even though we might be tempted to think differently at the time.

4. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S LAW?

The righteous receive the word and obey it, but the ungodly scorn it and walk in rebellion against God.

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Thy commandments” (Psalms 119:66).

“The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart.
Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in Thy law” (Psalms 119:69-70).

- a. It was after being afflicted that David was brought back to obedience of God’s word (Psalms 119:67). But not everyone responds in the same way! Steven afflicted his fellow Jews with the word of God (Acts 6:8-7:53), and they responded by stoning him to death (Acts 7:54-58).
- b. Let us consider the two basic responses to God’s words in this section of the psalm:
 - 1) The response of David to God’s word ought to be that of every child of God: we must believe it (John 5:24), have a desire to learn it (Acts 17:11), resolve to obey it (James 1:22), and delight in it (1 Peter 2:2).

- Belief. After hearing God's law, David said, "I believe in Your commandments" (**Psalms 119:66b**).
- Desire to learn. "Teach me good discernment" (**Psalms 119:66a**). These are found "according to Your word" (**Psalms 119:65b**).
- Resolve to obey. Regardless of what others said or thought, David said, "With all my heart I will observe Your precepts" (**Psalms 119:69b**).
- Delight. David recognized the goodness of God's Law, which why he delighted in it: "I delight in Your Law" (**Psalms 119:70**).

2) The response of the ungodly:

- Love lies over truth. David said, "The arrogant have forged a lie against me" (**Psalms 119:69**), even though he was righteous. They preferred to concoct a lie against him rather than believe the truth about him.
 - Heart is covered with fat. David says of the proud, "Their heart is covered with fat" (**Psalms 119:70**). A strange expression! Dr. Waterland says, "The sense is... they are dull, stupid, insensible, and past feeling, neither affected with the terrors nor comforts of God's word: so a similar phrase signifies in Isaiah 6:10". Solomon wrote, "Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid" (**Proverbs 12:1**).
- c. God's word is truth and it afflicts us when we go astray. The righteous person believes the word, desires to learn it, resolves to obey it, and delights in it. Such a person receives correction and lives. An ungodly person loves lies and is senseless or stupid; such reject correction and die (**Proverbs 15:10**).

5. WHICH DO YOU CONSIDER BETTER – RICHES OR GOD'S LAW?

Many unbelievers consider wealth more valuable than the word of God, and even some believers; betrayed in their speech and behavior.

"The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (**Psalms 119:72**).

- a. In another place David said, "Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold" (**Psalms 119:127**). In another psalm, David, praising God's precepts, says, "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (**Psalms 19:7-10**). Unbelievers take the opposite view, but for believers the word of God is very precious above all things.
- b. If we regard God's word as so very precious, then we will regard the affliction or discipline that comes through His word as valuable. As Christians, we are making every effort to live by God's word (**1 Peter 2:1-3**), and striving to be conformed to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**). Any rebuke or correction, therefore, that comes through His word will help toward these goals.
- c. Rebuke, correction, or affliction is designed to make us better people. Paul's affliction of the Corinthians produced "a repentance without regret, leading to salvation" (**2 Corinthians 7:10**). This affliction also produced earnestness, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, and zeal (**2 Corinthians 7:11**). The affliction of God's word makes us better, but riches corrupt and make one worse (the majority of the time).

Conclusion

1. When we sin, God's word will afflict or discipline us. This may come through our own reading, someone personally correcting us, or a preacher. Such affliction is not meant to drive us away, but draw us nearer to God.
2. However, whether such affliction actually brings about the desired result – repentance - depends on how we respond to it. Do not be like the fool that despises affliction, but, instead, imitate David and who resolved to humbly and faithfully obey the Lord.

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Based on a chapter taken from "The Psalm Of The Word" by Andy Sochor.

Psalm 119 **The Blessings Of God's Word**

Overview

Most of us know a few things about Psalm 119. For example, we know it's long and that it talks a lot about God's Word. But if this is all we know we have entirely missed the heart of one of the richest Psalm's in the Bible.

As we approach Psalm 119 it can be a bit intimidating, after all it is the longest Psalm and longest chapter in the Bible. Indeed, it is has often been referred to as "The Everest of the Psalter." But even more than this, we may feel that the author has reached some distant spiritual plateau that is far off from our own daily experience.

No matter what we feel as we approach this Psalm I would like to invite you to reconsider your first impressions. As you enter into this study begin to pray that God would open your eyes to "behold wondrous things" in His Word (**Psalms 119:18**).

In reality Psalm 119 isn't just the longest chapter in the Bible, it's the longest prayer in the Bible! As David Powlison says, "Psalm 119 is the most extensive I-to-You conversation in the Bible... In other words, Psalm 119 is a personal prayer... In it, we overhear the honest words erupting when what God says gets into you. We hear someone speaking to the God who speaks, someone who needs the God who speaks, someone who loves the God who speaks."

We are praying that as you study and soak up this portion of God's Word you will fall deeper in love with the God of the Word and seek to live every moment in the light of His presence.

Quick Facts About Psalm 119

- ▶ It is the longest chapter in the entire Bible and known as "the Everest of the Psalter". It the same size as the entire book James or Philippians or Ruth.
- ▶ It is written in an acrostic form using the Hebrew alphabet as its structural guide:
 - There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and therefore there are 22 stanzas in Psalm 119. Each verse in a particular stanza starts with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet that it is named after (For example "Aleph" verse 1-8 all start with the Hebrew letter "A")
 - Given the style of this Psalm it is best to consider each stanza as a point form list expressing various needs and the corresponding blessings God supplies through His Word.
- ▶ Written in an "I-to-You" conversational style and therefore can be understood to be a prayer.
- ▶ The author and time of writing are unknown, but scholars have suggested that it may have been written after the Babylonian exiles.
- ▶ Psalm 119 was often sung or prayed aloud to express worship and admiration to God who has so lovingly given us the blessing of His Word.
- ▶ Psalm 119 calls God's people to delight in God's faithfulness and truthfulness as expressed in His Word.

Below is a condensed summary of synonyms, statements and functions of the Word of God from Psalm 119.

Synonyms for the Word of God from Psalm 119	Statements about the Word of God from Psalm 119	Functions of the Word of God from Psalm 119
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law (<i>instructions</i>) 2. Testimonies (<i>testimonies</i>) 3. Precepts (<i>what God has appointed to be done</i>) 4. Statutes (<i>what the divine lawgiver has laid down</i>) 5. Commandments (<i>what God has commanded</i>) 6. Rules (<i>what the divine judge has ruled to be right</i>) 7. Word (<i>what God has spoken</i>) 8. Promise (<i>All that God has declared and decreed in His Word</i>) 	<p>God's Word is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Righteous (v.7, 62, 75, 106, 137, 160) • True (v.128, 142, 151, 160) • Sure (v.86) • Our delight (v.16, 24, 47, 77) • Our counselor (v.24) • Forever (v.89, 152, 160) • Sweet (v.103) • Light (v.105) • My songs (v.54) • The joy of my heart (v.111) 	<p>God's Word...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guards us from sin (v.9) • Keeps us pure (v.9) • Gives life (v.25, 50, 93) • Transforms our gaze (v.37) • Helps us to answer in opposition (v.42) • Comforts us in affliction (v.50) • Helps us be thankful (v.62) • Provides hope (v.81) • Sustains us in affliction (v.92) • Makes us wise (v.98) • Brings understanding (v.130) • Leads us to grieve sin (v.136) • Helps us (v.175)

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