

PS 119 & AFFLICTION - PART 2

I. BRIEF REVIEW OF AFFLICTION - PART 1

A. Ps 119.97: Psalmist's chief emphasis is on loving God's Law

1. He gives five reasons for LOVING God's Law

- a. Reason # 1: It gives true wisdom (vvs 98-100)
- b. Reason # 2: Holds the believer to the path of righteousness
- c. Reason # 3: **God** is believer's teacher through the Word
- d. Reason # 4: The Word is sweeter than honeycomb
- e. Reason # 5: Hating every wrong path

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B. Before this, the psalmist gave reasons for deciding value of the word

1. Ps 119.65-67

You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.
Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
For I believe in Your commandments.
Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

C. what is Affliction ?

1. Definition

- a. "The word 'affliction' is a word that brings to mind physical and mental suffering. Someone who is afflicted is disturbed or possibly frightened because of danger, pain, or some kind of distress".

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Carpenter, E. E., & Comfort, P. W. (2000). In Holman treasury of key Bible words

2. Difference among sources of affliction

a. Origin of affliction

- 1). # 1: Genesis curse from original sin
- 2). # 2: The cosmic conflict between Satan and Jesus Christ cited
- 3). World system affliction is common to every human in every time
Job 5.7

For man is born for trouble,
As sparks fly upward.

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b. Further God disciplines believers through trials/afflictions in at least two ways

- 1). God allows affliction for a purpose, but not sending it
- 2). God deliberately sends affliction for a reason & outcome

3. Scripture gives several sources & types of affliction

a. From OT

- 1). National affliction, resulting from the oppression of a political entity
- 2). Natural affliction
- 3). Spiritual affliction

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b. From NT

- 1). God uses it to induce humility
- 2). God uses it to promote holiness
- 3). God uses it to promote endurance for end times / end of life
- 4). God uses it to build believer's experience for the instruction of others
- 5). It comes from natural causes
- 6). Persecution because of faithfulness to Christ
- 7). God use it to build discipline for the purpose of Christian maturity
- 8). Comes as pain resulting from personal sin
- 9). Occurs to give glory to God

4. Believers guaranteed affliction

- a. Jesus indicated trials and sorrows for his followers
 - b. Paul taught that entrance to the kingdom of God comes with many tribulations
 - c. Afflictions must not shake a Christian's faith
 - d. Afflictions are a finishing up of the remainder of Christ's suffering for his body, the church
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II. GOD'S ROLE IN AFFLICTION

A. Believer isn't able to understand God's strategy in applying affliction

1. Job 42.1-6

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Then Job answered the LORD and said,

"I know that You can do all things,

And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'

"Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

'Hear, now, and I will speak;

I will ask You, and You instruct me.'

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;

But now my eye sees You;

Therefore I retract,

And I repent in dust and ashes."

B. God uses affliction to instruct & discipline His people

1. OT examples

a. Israelites' sojourn in Egypt

Ex 4:31

So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD
was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had
seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped

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b. Israelites' troubles during the period of the judges

Neh 9:26, 27

But they became disobedient and rebelled against You,

And cast Your law behind their backs

And killed Your prophets who had admonished them

So that they might return to You,

And they committed great blasphemies.

"Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their
oppressors who oppressed them,

But when they cried to You in the time of their distress,

You heard from heaven, and according to Your great
compassion

You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the
hand of their oppressors.

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(No slide)

c. Israelites' exile in Babylon

Is 26:16

O LORD, they sought You in distress;

They could only whisper a prayer,

Your chastening was upon them

2. Ultimate goal for believers through affliction

a. Rom 5.3-5

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And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1). 2 Cor 4.16-17

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

C. Deeper understanding of God's love & goodness under affliction

1. Why focus on these two character facets ?

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a. Conditions when under affliction

- 1). Usually you can't see the reason
- 2). The duration may be long and wearing down faith
- 3). Length & severity usually gives to speculation as to reason
- 4). Nobody but God knows the reason, the duration, and the depth

b. All of these in some mixture call out for something to hang onto

- 1). God's' character is the ONLY reliable FACTS we have consistently
- 2). These two are the most empathetic and uplifting under affliction

2. God's Love

a. What is GOD'S love ?

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1). It is not understandable or even knowable to us as humans

1 Tim 6.16b

"who ... dwells in unapproachable light..."

2). It's His nature, not just an action or reaction

a). Definition - a person's nature:

- ... The fundamental dispositions and traits of a person
- ... How a person normally behaves
- ... Gives reason to see how God treated His Israelite children and extend it to His Christian children

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b). God's love is different from normal human love

... Human

- Eros - romantic
- Storge - familial
- Philia - brotherhood of believers

... Agape Love is defined as: "the unselfish, self-sacrificing love that God has for his people."

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3). God's love is by His nature ...

a). For all people

... Unconditional

Rom 5.8

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. "

b). For believers

... We are His

1 John 3.1

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. "

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... Consistent & infinite

Eph 3.17b-19

"that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

PS 36.5

"Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies."

... He loves us so much He put His Spirit in us

Rom 5.5

"...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

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... God loves believer as much as He does Jesus

John 17.23b

"...so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me"

... Protective toward believers

Ps 17.8

" Keep me as the apple of the eye;
Hide me in the shadow of Your wings"

... He loves us as a parent developing His child

Prov 3.11-12

"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD
Or loathe His reproof,
For whom the LORD loves He reproveth,
Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights"

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b. Scripture examples of God's love for people

1). Consider Jesus' actions while on earth

- a). Jesus did not punish those sinning around Him
... He taught, fed, and healed them
- b). He healed and did other acts of kindness
- c). He loved the rich young ruler
- d). He forgave the sinful woman at the well
- e). He forgave those who tortured and killed Him

2). John 3.16 is the ultimate example

a). Consider the impact of this ON GOD

- ... God teaches about Him through analogs we can understand
- ... He created the Crucifixion so we could understand His love for everyone
 - God the Son in torture at the hand of His created beings
 - > No greater love than
 - God the Father crafting the plan and then holding back as it played out
 - > What parent would sacrifice his child to save others
 - God the Spirit standing by and refraining from bringing it to a halt
 - > The sheer difficulty of attending to His duty as a "Comrade"(?), suffers and dies
 - This requires love throughout all three Persons of the Godhead

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b). This shows the sacrificial aspect of God's love

... He will "bend over backwards" to protect and nurture His children

... 1 John 4.9-10

"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"

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c. What does that mean to believer under affliction ?

1). God cares when the believer is suffering

a). Psalm 31.7

"I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul, "

b). Lam 3.19-23

"Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.

Surely my soul remembers

And is bowed down within me.

This I recall to my mind,

Therefore I have hope.

The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,

For His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness"

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c). Lam 3.32-33

"For if He causes grief,

Then He will have compassion

According to His abundant lovingkindness.

For He does not afflict willingly

Or grieve the sons of men. "

2). Given all the above descriptions of God's love ...

a). How could we not depend on and trust God's character even under affliction ?

b). In fact that is all we can trust, but there is nothing better and it is sure - He has said so

3. A brief thought to God's goodness

a. What is GOD'S goodness ?

1). Isa 54.10

“For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

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b. What does that mean to a believer under affliction ?

1). Trusting His goodness follows from God's love for the believer

2). God's intent is good.. good is therefore not bad

3). Since God's goodness is His character trait, His nature is to do good

a). God has unlimited resources, wisdom, and sovereignty
to draw from

b). God loves His child

c). How good will He make the results under affliction ?

... In line with His goals >

- Believer must trust, have faith that is His intent

... Growing the believer with good results are His goals

... Along the way God will use the believer's affliction and growth
to influence others to produce good results

III. BELIEVER'S ROLE IN AFFLICTION

A. Reliance on God's character

1. Heb **'anah** for affliction does not describe God afflicting willingly

a. Lam 3.33

For He does not afflict willingly

Or grieve the sons of men

b. The Hebrew text says literally that He does not afflict them
“from His heart.”

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2. Key character traits of God to rely on

a. His love for the believer

b. His grace > giving what is not deserved

c. His mercy > will not make the trial more than can be endured

d. His sovereignty > He is in control of everything

e. His knowledge & wisdom > He knows what He is doing

f. His holiness > He won't allow anything sinful to occur

B. Calling out to God for aid

1. In Israel's distress they cried out to God, who delivered them and led them into obedience

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God's promises to believer

- a. To rescue the believer from affliction

Ps 34:19

Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all

Ps 37:39

But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength in time of trouble

- b. God's plan

- 1). Takes some time

Heb 12.11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;
yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the
peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- 2). God will work the affliction to good

Rom 8.28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for
good to those who love God, to those who are called according
to His purpose.

C. Having a sustaining attitude

1. Remember that God is sovereign

Ps 97.1-2

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The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands be glad.
Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

2. Remember that HE is producing the results intended by affliction

2 Cor 4.16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet
our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is
producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,
while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not
seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not
seen are eternal.

IV. BACK TO THE PSALMIST'S REACTION TO AFFLICTION

A. He looked at the inestimable value of the Bible to the believer

1. Ps 119.71-72

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It is good for me that I was afflicted,

That I may learn Your statutes.

The law of Your mouth is better to me

Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

- a. The psalmist concludes that God's purpose was to bring him back to dependence on His Word
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2. Reasons to love the Bible - even under affliction

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a. Reason # 1: It gives true wisdom

- 1). It gives us reasons for affliction

- 2). It assures us of God's character and promises to us

b. Reason # 2: Holds the believer to the path of righteousness

- 1). To not sin under the pressure of affliction

c. Reason # 3: **God** is believer's teacher through the Word

- 1). God Himself will guide us through the affliction

d. Reason # 4: The Word is sweeter than honeycomb

- 1). When we see the promises working, we will feel that they are sweet in staying us through the affliction

e. Reason # 5: Hating every wrong path

- 1). We are to learn to love the good, but also to hate evil
 - 2). We can see the evil causes behind the affliction
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V. ALLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO WORK IN AFFLICTIONS

A. Giving the spirit full sway to avoid disciplining affliction

1. So how does the believer hold to following God's command, avoid discipline ?

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a. Really understanding "death of self"

- 1). Avoiding thinking "I don't deserve this"
- 2). Remembering we are here for the purpose of God using us to His glory
- 3). Scripture defining it

a). Matt 16.24

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

b). Gal 5.24 - Further elaboration in what taking up the cross means personally

"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"

4). Andrew Murray elaborates ...

a). "This is the true self-denial to which our Savior calls us, the acknowledgment that self has nothing good in it, except as an empty vessel which God must fill"

b). "The moment God finds the creature abased and empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless" "The death to self is not your work, it is God's work"

5). This is the point the psalmist reached

Ps 119.67

Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

a). And God was answering him through all of the Word's teaching

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2. Again - how does the believer hold to God's commands & avoid discipline ?

a. WE can't! - Note a critical mechanism the Holy Spirit shows us in His Word

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1). Rom 8.7-8

"...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God"

2). Rom 8.13

"... by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

3). Bottom line - Any effort to partner with Spirit is still working from the flesh = tainted effort. Success comes only by giving Spirit full control

b. God's Word has told us how to stay with the Word in joy

1). 100 % filling by the Spirit necessary for success

a). Eph 5.18

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"

"filled"= Gk pleroo /play·ro·o/ >

to be filled to the full > 100 % !

b). Gal 5.16-17

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit... so that you may not do the things that you please"

... When a Christian does yield to the Spirit's 100% filling & control... promise is that he "...will not..." >

the double negative (Gk ou mē) is emphatic

"...carry out the desire of the flesh" > complete, fulfill (Gk teleo /tel·eh·o)

2). Note that the psalmist has written how fully dependent he is on God's teaching, giving him understanding, and pulling him back into the Word

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Conclusions