

Psalm 119:65-72

Introduction – Before taking up the next 10 Psalms, we are again going to handle a stanza of Psalm 119. This ninth stanza begins each verse with the letter *teth*. This stanza meditates upon the goodness of God. Five of the eight verses begin with “*tov*,” translated “good,” “well” and “better” (vv65, 66, 68, 71, 72). And though God is to be praised for His goodness, the psalm-singer is particularly singing of the goodness of God in affliction.

James Boice delineates five purposes or reasons that the righteous suffer. The first is that some suffering is simply the common lot of man (Job 5:7). The second is that suffering and affliction is corrective (and this is the theme of this stanza, v67). The third is that suffering is constructive, sharpening our skills and developing our character (Rom 5:3-4). The fourth is that affliction is given to glorify God in it (John 9:3). The fifth purpose of suffering, Boice says, is cosmic, demonstrating to Satan and the angels that a person can love and trust God for Who He is in Himself and not merely for what He gets out of Him (Job). The stanza before us explores the second of these five uses of affliction in the life of a believer.

The Good Dealings of God (and His Word) in Affliction (vv65-68) – Verse 65 is the text of the entire stanza; He begins with the conclusion. This is the summary of every Christian’s life when understood through the wisdom of the Word. God has dealt bountifully with you (Psalm 13:6, 16:5, 6, 18:35, 23:5, 6). Many times we do not think this is so, but our unbelief is repented of when we see every circumstance “*according to Your word*.” We learn of His faithfulness to His Word and to us and henceforth, our faith in God is strengthened. “*Recount the divine mercies shown to him from his birth, considering withal how unworthy he hath been of the least of those mercies*” (Horne). In fact, why has the Lord even considered us (Psalm 8:4) let alone not given us what we deserve? “*You have dealt well with Your servant*.”

“Teach me good judgment...” (v66) – Considering all he will sing about in the stanza, he cannot fully comprehend how good God has been nor why - and asks for such knowledge. We often misjudge the chastening hand of our heavenly Father and so we must ask for and seek greater wisdom in our afflictions. “*Lord, You did deal well with me when I thought You hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord*” (Spurgeon). This word, “*judgment*” is often translated “*taste*” (Exod 16:31, Job 6:6) or *discretion* (Prov 11:22). Without this good “*taste*” we miss the goodness of God in afflictions, we believe lies instead of holding to the truth, we turn to superstitions or other practices rather than trust God’s sovereign care. And note the second part of this verse – such discernment comes when we first believe His Word. As St. Anselm said, “*I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand*.”

“You are good, and do good...” (vv67-68) – Here we have a hint at what has brought about this stanza. The psalm-singer confesses that he had been going astray (morally wandering) and the Lord, through affliction, effectively brought him back (v67). One of the highest marks of the Fathers’ love is that He disciplines those He loves (Heb 12:5-11). What a horror to not have a good father who disciplines like our heavenly Father. Such faithful and painful discipline trains children to see the goodness of their father and their heavenly Father, and to see that “*He does good*,” calling him to cry out, “*teach me your statutes*” – in other words, “*I want to be like you, I want to follow your ways*.” Oh, the goodness of God (Psalm 86:5, 106:1, 107:1, 145:7-9). Even in affliction, God is good and does good. This is the confession of experience with eyes open to the sovereign work of God in one’s life.

The Goodness of God (and His Word) in Overcoming Afflictors (vv69-72) – We are to consider the psalmist, the Messiah, and then ourselves in every Psalm. Let us consider Jesus in these verses first. The proud rulers of Jerusalem thought too highly of themselves and Jesus made it clear (Matt 6:5, 23:5-6). Jesus was being made too much of and so, out of envy, they sought to put Jesus to death (Matt 26:59, 27:18). Jesus remained steadfast to the precepts of God (v69b, Matt 26:39, 42). Their hearts were “*fat as grease*” deadened to the Word to which Jesus found His delight (v70, Matt 13:14-15). One paraphrase of v70 is “*They’re bland as a bucket of lard, while I dance to the tune of your revelation*” (Peterson). Affliction began for Jesus at birth, and though He never went morally astray, yet He learned obedience through what He suffered (v71, Heb 5:8). And of course, Jesus turned down even all the gold of all the kingdoms of the world from the devil, for God’s promises to Him were far better (v72, Matt 4:8-10, Psalm 2:7-8).

What About Our Day/What About You? – The proud and insolent forge slander and smear campaigns against the righteous today as well. Social Media is ablaze with slander against Christians, especially the type that actually believe the whole Word of God, who delight in it. They openly hate and defy His Law and they afflict those who speak His name – and well beyond media posts, to active violence and murder. Their heart is as fat as grease; they cannot see straight. What does the psalm-singer do and what does this passage tell us to do in response? “*...keep your precepts with my whole heart...delight in Your law...learn Your statutes...*” (vv69-71). Without apology, double-down on the truth, goodness, and beauty of God’s Word and the God of that Word. “*Every disciple of Christ, who like his Master, goes contrary to the ways of the world, and condemns them, must expect to be, like that Master, slandered and (smeared)*” (Horne). And of their fat hearts? “*They delight in fatness, but I delight in Thee. Their hearts, through sensual indulgence, have grown insensible, coarse, and groveling – but You have saved me from such a fate through Thy chastening hand*” (Spurgeon).

It is good when you have been afflicted (v71). God says it is good for it is His corrective against your own temptations – it drives you to Him. “*When I find myself in the cellar of affliction, I look for the Lord’s choicest wines*” (Rutherford). And it is not only the law that is better, but the “*law of Your mouth*” which is better than all the riches of the world (v72). This sweet expression reminds us that the law comes from God’s own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. The same lips which spoke us into existence has spoken the law by which we are to govern that existence. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly...

Praying this into Your Own Soul – We must meditate over the Word of God in light of all past afflictions. We must not merely endure affliction; we must interpret affliction, and we must do so with the Word of God. Doing so strengthens us in present afflictions and prepares us for future afflictions. Think of afflictions as the classroom and the Word as the curriculum.

Learn to pray for discernment and knowledge from the afflictions so that you do not miss what God is teaching (James 1:5). God is good and He does good (v68). Do you know this? Do you really know this? In Ephesians 1:16-18 Paul prays for knowledge, enlightenment, and understanding. He has just given an amazing overview of the glorious gospel which was planned in eternity past and completed with the redeeming work of Jesus (Eph 1:3-14). But he stops and prays, for he knows these words of God’s sovereign goodness over an afflicted world, riddled with wickedness and condemnation, need to be explored in the minds and hearts of believers – you and me. The psalm-singer is doing just this as he praises God’s goodness in affliction. God saves, and He saves to the uttermost.

Dave Hatcher – November 16, 2025