

# PSALM 119.65-72

psalm  
God's Word 119

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*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Psalm 119.65-72  
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## Introduction to Psalm 119.65-72

The theme of this stanza is affliction – what it is, where it comes from, how we should respond.

The psalmist's primary conviction is that all affliction comes from God. Therefore, all affliction is good, or at least, for our good. Especially if it serves to drive us to God and His Law for the comfort and encouragement we need.

Affliction may not feel good. Certainly not while we're in it. But faith requires that we look beyond affliction to God and His Word. Thus focused, we can find the good in all situations, and give God thanks and praise.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Good, Good, Good, Good Afflictions

*Pray Psalm 119.65.*

You have dealt well with Your servant,  
O LORD, according to Your word.

*Sing Psalm 119.65-67.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

You have dealt well with me, O Lord, just as You promised in Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment, help me to know all that I need to love You so.  
Let Your commandments light my way. Send sweet affliction when I stray,  
that I may walk Your holy way and keep Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verse 65.*

*Preparation*

1. How did God deal with the psalmist?
2. On what basis?

*Meditation*

I think the psalmist particularly enjoyed writing the ט (*teth*) stanza. It gave him an opportunity to use the Hebrew word, טוֹב (*ton*), which means “good” and variations of that. It’s like he’s hearing in the back of his mind the “good vibrations” of “good” that echo all the way back to God’s original purpose for the world, when He made all things exceedingly טוֹב (Gen. 1.31).

Forms of טוֹב appear six times in these eight verses. So this is a “feel-good” stanza, right? Well, no.

It’s about affliction. Experiencing it. Holding on during it. Getting through and over it. And realizing that all afflictions are for our טוֹב. In the psalmist’s case, he was being lied about by proud men (v. 69). Slandered, libeled, worse: all afflictions are exactly in line with God’s will and “according to” His Word.

So just to be clear, the psalmist begins his stanza with his favorite word: “Good You have done with Your servant, O LORD...” Just as He said He would.

Jesus said we would know affliction (Jn. 16.33). Paul said the same (2 Tim. 3.12). How do we prepare for such afflictions? By realizing they are part of God’s טוֹב plan for us, and therefore can be received with thanksgiving.

They are all good, good, good, good afflictions (v. 71).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.16.*

The *Catechism* asks: What is the chief end of man? The answer: The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

“You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD,  
according to Your word” (Ps. 119.65).

We need all the help we can get to fulfill our purpose in life.  
God’s help is good. Sometimes painfully so.

But good, nonetheless.  
Our joy is found in truly believing this.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11.33).

If we understood, where would our faith be? And without that faith, it is impossible to please God. “For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11.6).

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”*  
(Spafford, 1873)

“I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that  
I would see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and  
He will strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!” (Ps. 27.13, 14)

Good. Wait. Good. By faith. Good.

*For reflection*

1. How many ways can you say that God has “dealt well” (done good) with you?
2. Why does God allow various afflictions, troubles, and disappointments to come our way?
3. What is our duty in the face of such adversities?

*However God has dealt with us, he has dealt with us better than we deserve; and all in love, and for our good.* Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

*Pray Psalm 119.71, 72.*

What’s troubling or burdening you today? Hold it up to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to make it a source of blessing and instruction in His good and perfect will.

*Sing Psalm 119.71, 72.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

All my afflictions, Lord, I turn to You that I Your Law may learn.  
Teach me to hold Your Word in my heart, never from its true way to part.  
Your Law is better far to me than any wealth could ever be;  
open my eyes and let me see more of Your Word!

## 2 When Your Walk through a Storm

*Pray Psalm 119.66.*

Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
For I believe Your commandments.

*Sing Psalm 119.65-67.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

You have dealt well with me, O Lord, just as You promised in Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment, help me to know all that I need to love You so.  
Let Your commandments light my way. Send sweet affliction when I stray,  
that I may walk Your holy way and keep Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verse 66.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist ask of God?
2. Why did he ask that?

*Meditation*

Let's keep in mind that the context of this stanza is realizing the goodness of God amid affliction. The psalmist needs the "good judgment" of the Lord so that he doesn't do something unbecoming his role as a servant (v. 65) of the Lord.

We all know that, when storms break around us and we're suddenly caught up in the confusion of it all, we can lose sight of the Lord and His Word and react to our situation on our own wits. We lash out, fall into a brooding state, feel sorry for ourselves and angry at those who have provoked the storm upon us, and more. The old Broadway song has some good advice for us: "When you walk through the storm, hold your head up high..." As affliction descends, keep looking up, looking to the Lord, calling out to Him for "good judgment" during your time of trial.

After all, like the psalmist, we believe in God's Word (v. 66). We believe it is the truth that sanctifies us (Jn. 17.17) and that it can give us whatever we need for every good work in any situation (2 Tim. 3.15-17). The Word can light a true path for us even amid the darkest storm of affliction (Ps. 119.105). So if we keep looking to Jesus, setting our mind on Him (Col. 3.1-3) and seeking His good judgment, He will help us to remember and not to forget all that He has taught us in His Word. Then, even as the storm rages around us, we'll be able to "walk on with hope in your heart" because we "never walk alone." The Lord Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28.20), and He is ever ready to give us good judgment and strength to carry out His Word.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
for I believe Your commandments" (Ps. 119.66).

How do we get good judgment and knowledge?  
By fearing God.

And how do we know what to fear God about?

By knowing His commandments.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
a good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Ps. 111.10).

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9.10).

And if we lack the necessary wisdom?

He will supply whatever it is that we need:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jms. 1.5).

We are without excuse.

What about our ability to believe?

Even there His hand is ready to assist:

A man came to Jesus who had a son who was very ill. And he said to Him, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mk. 9.22-24)

There is no substitute for obedience to the commandments. And in obedience we find assurance and hope and heightened belief and help in the midst of affliction.

*In times like these you need a Savior,  
In times like these you need an anchor;  
Be very sure, be very sure  
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!  
This Rock is Jesus, Yes, He's the One;  
This Rock is Jesus, The only One!  
Be very sure, be very sure  
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!*  
(Jones, 1944)

*For reflection*

1. What can you do to make sure, when trials arise, that you make good judgments about what to do?
2. How can trials and afflictions actually *strengthen* faith and obedience rather than *diminish* them?
3. What can you do to help a fellow believer who is going through a time of affliction know the goodness of God?

*The prophet already believed God's commandments; but his veneration for the law, proceeding from a holy zeal, led him to desire conformity to it, and made him afraid, and not without cause, of inconsiderately going astray. Let us then learn, that after God has framed our hearts to the obedience of his law, we must, at the same time, ask wisdom from him by which to regulate our zeal.*  
John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.66*

*Pray Psalm 119.71, 72.*

As you pray, turn your face upward to God. Close your eyes and seek Jesus, exalted in glory, as He looks upon you and prepares to give you mercy and grace for your time of need.

*Sing Psalm 119.71, 72.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

All my afflictions, Lord, I turn to You that I Your Law may learn.

Teach me to hold Your Word in my heart, never from its true way to part.

*Psalm 119.65-72*

Your Law is better far to me than any wealth could ever be;  
open my eyes and let me see more of Your Word!



### 3 Antidote to Straying

*Pray Psalm 119.67.*

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

*Sing Psalm 119.65-67.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

You have dealt well with me, O Lord, just as You promised in Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment, help me to know all that I need to love You so.  
Let Your commandments light my way. Send sweet affliction when I stray,  
that I may walk Your holy way and keep Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verse 67.*

*Preparation*

1. Where was the psalmist before he was afflicted?
2. What was the result of his being afflicted?

*Meditation*

Christians today do not like the idea that God might discipline us for one reason or another. God loves us, they insist. He knows we are frail. He doesn't chasten or afflict us, but His patience and kindness bear with us in our frailties. He accepts us as we are, warts and all.

Yeah. No.

Here's how the writer of Hebrews phrased the idea conveyed in today's text: "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons... Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12.7, 8, 11).

Our psalmist testifies that he was straying from God's path, but now he keeps the Word of God. What happened to cause that change? Affliction. Good, good, good, good affliction. The storm of proud men's slander, libel, and lies (v. 69). Oh yes, this psalmist had lost his way, and his detractors took advantage of his straying to "perfect-storm" his reputation with their greasy gossip (v. 70).

And that got his attention. He was trained by his affliction and made his way back to the Lord. People may slander and libel us, but we must not give them reasons to do so. The psalmist's affliction shook him to his soul and brought him back to the Lord and His Word. The workings of grace can sometimes be painful. But in the end, they're always amazing. Expect that to be the case whenever you stray from the Lord.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Monstrous. That is how John Calvin speaks today in our quote about our recalcitrant spirit. How many of us really see our disobedience to God in that way? But in fact, if we do a little study of discipline, we will see that is exactly how we should view ourselves.

The remedy, though, is all of God's grace. And He is more than willing to forgive us, after we have learned what He is trying to teach us.

Here are a few verses about parent/child relationships and the need for discipline in that arena:

“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray” (Prov. 10.17).  
“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid” (Prov. 12.1).  
“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Prov. 13.1).  
“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Prov. 13. 24).  
“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Prov. 22.15).  
“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29.15).  
“Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to our soul” (Prov. 29.17).

If we are truly honest, how many of us enjoy a demonstrably disobedient child? Should God enjoy us any better? I think not.

“You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you” (Deut. 8.5).  
“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole” (Job 5.17, 18).  
“Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law...” (Ps. 94.12).  
“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects...” (Prov. 3.11, 12).  
“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3.19).

The motive behind a parent’s discipline is first love, and then training for safety. We all want our children to listen to us when we warn them of danger.

In the very same way, God, first of all, loves us. Then He wants us to hear His voice as it guides us safely and obediently through life. And if we should falter? He swiftly and carefully brings us back from going astray.

We wouldn’t want it any other way, for now we keep His Word.

*For reflection*

1. Why is it reasonable to think that God would lead us into afflictions from time to time?
2. How should you respond to Him at those times?
3. What should we be looking for during our times of affliction?

*It is indeed a monstrous thing obstinately to refuse to submit ourselves to Him; and yet experience demonstrates, that so long as He deals gently with us, we are always breaking forth into insolence. Since even a prophet of God required to have his rebellion corrected by forcible means, this kind of discipline is assuredly most needful for us. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.67*

*Pray Psalm 119.68-70.*

Thank God for the times He has used affliction to draw you closer to Him and more into line with His Word.

*Sing Psalm 119.68-70.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Lord, You are good, and good You do; teach me that I may do good, too.  
Wicked men my true pathway distort: I keep Your Word with all my heart.  
Their heart is dark with sin’s cruel blight, but in Your Law is my delight.  
Let me not turn from Your sweet Light, nor from Your Word.

## 4 Love Hurts. Sometimes.

*Pray Psalm 119.68.*

You *are* good, and do good;  
Teach me Your statutes.

*Sing Psalm 119.68-70.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Lord, You are good, and good You do; teach me that I may do good, too.  
Wicked men my true pathway distort: I keep Your Word with all my heart.  
Their heart is dark with sin's cruel blight, but in Your Law is my delight.  
Let me not turn from Your sweet Light, nor from Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verse 68.*

*Preparation*

1. How did the psalmist regard the Lord?
2. What did he want God to do for him?

*Meditation*

God, the psalmist confesses, is good (בּוֹרֵא). Consequently, He *does* good (מַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב). God does what He is, and this should be a goal for our own walk with Him: So to learn His Word that it sinks into every component of our soul – heart, mind, and conscience – and puts down firm anchor there. The Holy Spirit uses the Law of God to show us the glory of Jesus Christ and to transform us into His image (2 Cor. 3.12-18). So the more of God's Law we learn from Him, the more of Jesus and the goodness of God will show through us. The more we hide the Word of God in our heart, so that it dwells abundantly there (Col. 3.16), the more we will do the works and talk the talk that reflects the very character of the Word of God – of Jesus Himself.

To what was the psalmist referring when he wrote that God does good? Obviously, to the affliction that had come upon him as he began to stray from God's path (cf. vv. 69, 67). What's good for us is what we need at any time to remain faithful and fruitful in the Lord. That doesn't mean it's always pleasant (Heb. 12.3-11). Love hurts sometimes. The love of God must hurt us to break through our rebellion, reclaim our soul, expose and eradicate our sins, and get us back on path. He is a good God Who does such good and loving things for us, to prompt and empower us to draw closer to Him and to remain in His Word.

Love hurts sometimes. Ask Jesus.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Our daughter Ashley makes wedding cakes and cupcakes. They are fantastically beautiful, delicious, and good. I ask her, "How do you do this?" And she patiently explains it. I listen. But frankly, there is not a chance that I will ever be able to learn how to do what she does.

I feel the same way about this verse. We state the obvious, "You, God, are good. And You do good." And then the psalmist adds this in: "Teach me Your statutes." (Ps. 119.68) Seriously? Is there a chance that we can learn to do good? Like God does, if He teaches us His statutes?

Well, it is certainly the first, and only place to start. As Paul wrote, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7.12). So, goodness is encompassed in keeping the Law of God.

Also, as Jesus said to the person who approached Him with this question, "Good Teacher, what good thing

shall I do that I may have eternal life?": "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 16, 17). Life itself is attached to keeping the Law of God.

The prophet Isaiah quotes God as saying, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is. 1.16, 17). God holds out hope for us that we can indeed learn from Him how to do good. We are first to repent from our evil ways, and then we can set about learning from the Law how to do good.

Paul has some words of encouragement for us. He wrote, "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good" (2 Thess. 3.13). Practicing the Law without ceasing increases our learning of the Law. And in so doing, we are imprinting on our lives the possibility of actually doing good.

Back to our analogy of wedding cakes and cupcakes. I will never be able to do what Ashley does, but; I can learn to make muffins. And maybe even good muffins. It is the best I can do.

God, our loving heavenly Father, "pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103.13, 14). But He also expects us to do the best we possibly ever can, to obey Him and follow Him. He is willing to "Teach us His statutes" (Ps. 119.68).

And Jesus adds, "Learn from Me" (Matt. 11.29).

*O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;  
Be Thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend:  
I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side,  
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.*  
(Bode, 1866)

*For reflection*

1. We can't do everything, but we can do whatever God appoints for us to do, in our own sphere. What opportunities for serving Him and obeying His Word are before you today?
2. What dangers or temptations might cause you to stray from God's path?
3. How can you prepare to resist those temptations and hold fast to the Law and Word of God?

*He beseeches God to exercise his goodness towards him, not by causing him to increase in riches and honors, or to abound in pleasures, but by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the law.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.68*

*Pray Psalm 119.65-67.*

Thank God for His goodness, and for all the ways He has shown His goodness to you. Call on Him to teach you more of His Law and to help you in your daily walk with Him to keep His Word and to exercise "good judgment and knowledge".

*Sing Psalm 119.65-67.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

You have dealt well with me, O Lord, just as You promised in Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment, help me to know all that I need to love You so.  
Let Your commandments light my way. Send sweet affliction when I stray,  
that I may walk Your holy way and keep Your Word.

## 5 Slandered, Libeled

*Pray Psalm 119.69, 70.*

The proud have forged a lie against me,  
*But* I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.  
Their heart is as fat as grease,  
*But* I delight in Your law.

*Sing Psalm 119.68-70.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Lord, You are good, and good You do; teach me that I may do good, too.  
Wicked men my true pathway distort: I keep Your Word with all my heart.  
Their heart is dark with sin's cruel blight, but in Your Law is my delight.  
Let me not turn from Your sweet Light, nor from Your Word.

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verses 69, 70.*

*Preparation*

1. Who was spreading lies about the psalmist?
2. How did he resolve to overcome those lies?

*Meditation*

We arrive at the crux of the psalmist's affliction: Proud, wicked men were lying about him. Men with thick, greasy hearts, hearts which were not directed in love for God and neighbors. The psalmist was being slandered, libeled. It was a vicious attack and a difficult burden. But the psalmist may have brought such mocking and scorn on himself by his departing the Lord's pathway (v. 67).

Did the wicked see him in his dalliance? Or hear about whatever it was he had done to invite God's discipline? Did they know he had lied (v. 29) and coveted (v. 36)? We don't know. But it seems clear they were making the most of the psalmist's straying to put him down and undermine his authority.

And God was using this for the psalmist's good (v. 68), to firm up his resolution to keep the Law of God. He would not allow his heart to be drawn away from God's Word (v. 69). He would take delight, not in putting others down or slandering them in return, but in the Law of God and its promises (v. 70).

The best defense against those who mock, scorn, and libel us is to live consistently according to God's Word (vv. 41, 42). They may use against us words we've never heard in the Bible; but the words of Scripture will be our refuge and strength, to help us stand up against all affliction and maintain our journey in the pathway of the Lord (cf. Ps. 12).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Isn't it nice of the Lord that He gives us words that we can say about those who slander us? We seem to be allowed to refer to them as proud, greasy, slimy (OK, I'm ad libbing) -hearted people. And that feels good.

But then in return for that favor we must find a way to keep God's precepts and delight in His Law. "Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (Eph. 4.26, 27).

"Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!" (Ps. 106.3) Even in the face of false accusations by horrible people. For whatever reason they choose to be cruel.

"The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul,  
but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding” (Prov. 15.31, 32).

God wants us to learn from the mistakes of others. He would never want us to be proud, or greasy-hearted to them, would He?

Jesus spells out for us exactly how we are to control ourselves, our thoughts, and our love for Him and others: “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mk. 12.29-31).

If we are keeping those commandments as we should, then there really won’t be much room left in our life for anger or hurt or pride. Or even legal name calling. Our time will be filled with the goodness of God and His work. Our calendar truly will be just too full to care one whit about being slandered or libeled or attacked by the greasy-hearted.

As Paul Simon sang, we’ll be “one step ahead...”

*For reflection*

1. We stay “one step ahead” of those who slander and lie about us by keeping the Word of God. Explain.
2. Why do you think people speak lies and say bad things about Christians? Do we deserve some of this? What other reasons might there be, and how does this help us in understanding those who do?
3. How can you prepare right now to deal with those today who might slander or libel your faith?

*The proud are full of the world, and its wealth and pleasures; these make them senseless, secure, and stupid. God visits his people with affliction, that they may learn his statutes. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.65-72*

*Pray Psalm 119.71, 72.*

Ask the Lord for courage to live out your faith before a hostile world. What will that require of you today? Commit your day to the Lord, and yourself as a living sacrifice unto His glory.

*Sing Psalm 119.71, 72.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

All my afflictions, Lord, I turn to You that I Your Law may learn.

Teach me to hold Your Word in my heart, never from its true way to part.

Your Law is better far to me than any wealth could ever be;

open my eyes and let me see more of Your Word!

## 6 Hurts So Good

*Pray Psalm 119.71, 72.*

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted,  
That I may learn Your statutes.  
The law of Your mouth is better to me  
Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.*

*Sing Psalm 119.71, 72.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

All my afflictions, Lord, I turn to You that I Your Law may learn.  
Teach me to hold Your Word in my heart, never from its true way to part.  
Your Law is better far to me than any wealth could ever be;  
open my eyes and let me see more of Your Word!

*Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verses 71, 72.*

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist consider to be “good”?
2. How much did he value the Law of God?

*Meditation*

It takes discipline to say with the psalmist, “*It is good for me that I have been afflicted*”. Since God is good and always does good, and since nothing that comes to us does not ultimately come from His hand, being afflicted is good because God sends or allows it. It may hurt sometimes, but it’s good for us. We just need to keep that in mind, so that we respond as we should – with thanksgiving – whenever affliction comes (Phil. 4.6, 7).

Further, affliction is good because it helps us to learn the statutes, Law, and Word of God (v. 71). Affliction should drive us to the Word, to discover God’s good purposes and promises, so that we cling to them rather than to the dust of this changeable world (cf. Ps. 119.25, 31). When affliction comes, take it as a prompt from the Lord to seek Him in His Word, and to keep seeking until you find a good word to cling to in your time of need. Think of Jesus, as He was hanging on the cross, running through and praying all those psalms that had to do with His crucifixion and the promise of glory to which that would lead (Pss. 22, 34, 69, etc.). That’s the example we should follow when affliction comes.

Then, as we follow this path, clinging to God’s good Word, we will discover just how rich and beautiful and reliable and true the Word of God is, and we will value it more than any material wealth or wellbeing (v. 72). And that will help to prepare us for whatever affliction may be ramping up toward us next. Affliction can be a cycle of upward growth, but we must keep to the path of God’s Law for all our hurts to do their good work in us.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“That I may learn Your statutes...and Your Law...that is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.” (Ps. 119. 71, 71) And what is it that will happen to put us on this pathway? Afflictions.

The first thing we see this affliction accomplishing is to allow us to better keep some of the commandments; for if we are more satisfied with learning God’s statutes and His Law than in wanting things, we will not need to steal (Ex. 20.15); we will not need to lie (Ex. 20.16); nor will we need to covet (Ex. 20.17). If we desire God more than anything of a material nature, that will automatically keep us from committing the sins that

have to do with wanting more stuff. Plain and simple. A first positive step!

Peter used this very example to minister to a man lame from his birth. The man asked them for money, thinking that was the best thing that could possibly happen to him, but Peter said to him, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3.6). Well of course, he would prefer to walk than to have money, but he didn’t even imagine that was in the range of possibilities. However, we know that walking in Jesus is a possibility. So why would we ever ask for money instead of asking to be more like Him? Our afflictions should point us post haste to Jesus.

Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8.28). Are we called to His purpose? Do we love God? Then we know for certain that afflictions, although painful and horrible, work together for our good. Not that the afflictions are good, but that they will serve a good purpose in our life if we love God and are called by Him.

And Job. In all his afflictions he stated: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13.15). His faith was so strong that he was able to go on and say, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19.25-27).

This is where our afflictions must lead us to heighten our love for God and for His Law. And through this victory we will be blessed and will be a blessing to those in our Personal Mission Field.

Hurt that brings good.

*For reflection*

1. How can afflictions, trials, setbacks, and disappointments be good?
2. How can they provoke us to a greater love for and trust in God’s Word?
3. How can you support your fellow believers when they are going through afflictions?

*He here confirms the sentiment which we have previously considered — that it was profitable to him to be subdued by God's chastisements, that he might more and more be brought back and softened to obedience.* John Calvin (1509-1564).  
*Commentary on Psalm 119.71*

*Pray Psalm 119.68-70.*

Spend some time in prayer enumerating all the various ways God is good to you. Don’t forget the afflictions, great or small.

*Sing Psalm 119.68-70.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Lord, You are good, and good You do; teach me that I may do good, too.  
Wicked men my true pathway distort: I keep Your Word with all my heart.  
Their heart is dark with sin’s cruel blight, but in Your Law is my delight.  
Let me not turn from Your sweet Light, nor from Your Word.



## 7 Getting Good Right

Pray Psalm 119.68.

You *are* good, and do good;  
Teach me Your statutes.

Sing Psalm 119.68-70.

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

Lord, You are good, and good You do; teach me that I may do good, too.  
Wicked men my true pathway distort: I keep Your Word with all my heart.  
Their heart is dark with sin's cruel blight, but in Your Law is my delight.  
Let me not turn from Your sweet Light, nor from Your Word.

Read Psalm 119.65-72; meditate on verse 68.

*Preparation*

1. What did the psalmist say of God?
2. What did he want God to do for him?

*Meditation*

The common understanding of “good” typically begins with each person. That is, in our day, we have strayed so far from the path of God and His Law that we believe we can define the terms of goodness, and that we may do so in terms favorable or advantageous to us.

How absurd to believe that any finite, flawed, and fallible human mind could be relied upon to define the terms of goodness! And yet we do it every day.

A proper understanding of “good” and “goodness” begins in God. God alone is good, as Jesus reminded us (Matt. 19.17). Who of us would describe suffering, inconvenience, or affliction as “good”? God does. God *is* good and therefore everything He *does* is good, including allowing us to come into affliction (v. 71). “Good” is whatever serves to conform us more to the image of Jesus Christ.

But God has not left us to grope about in mystical confusion to know Him and His goodness. He has given us His Law, and all His Word (Rom. 7.12; 2 Tim. 3.15-17); and He shows us that it is good to learn His Law (vv. 68, 71), because the more of His Law we learn – in our heart, mind, conscience, and life – the more His goodness will shape us for the good works for which we have been redeemed through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2.8-10).

Get good right by knowing God and Jesus Christ, and by learning the Law of God. Then the goodness of God will transform you – even, if necessary, through affliction – and good works will issue from you throughout your Personal Mission Field.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

To attain to goodness, to get “good right”, seems a Herculean task. And yet God is promising that through the Holy Spirit this is within the realm of possibilities. He told us through Isaiah that we should “learn to do good”. (Is. 1.17) OK. If God is telling us to learn this, then it is there in our wheelhouse to perform.

We can see from creation what God perceives as good. “And God saw that it was good.” (Gen. 1.10, 12, 18, 21, 25). And on the sixth day, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1.31).

And then we see Jesus. Pure perfection and goodness. The Ultimate Keeper of the Law of God. (Jn. 3.16) “The Son who has been perfected forever” (Heb. 7.28).

So then what is the purpose of our goodness? To “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5.16). And if we are truly doing good works and having our conduct honorable among the people of the world, even if they speak evil against us, they may, by our good works which they observe “glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2.12). Goodness is always a win/win situation.

And these good works, which we have the possibility of doing, have been created by God for us to do before we were ever born. Imagine that (Eph. 2.10).

What help can we offer each other as believers to accomplish this goodness? Paul wrote that he did not cease to pray for others, and to ask that they be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that [they might] walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy...” (Col. 1.9-11). What a beautiful and good gift we can give to our fellow-believers to pray for them and for the good works that God has called them to do.

And here is something else that is good: living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. Paul wrote that “this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior...” (1 Tim. 2.2, 3). In all our afflictions that has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?

“Getting good right” is a challenge for sure. And helping others get it right is part of the journey, too.

But all of God’s children, through every affliction and heartache, hold this precious promise dear: “Lo, I AM with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28.20).

*For reflection*

1. Why can we not rely on our own best ideas about goodness?
2. Good works are the reason God has saved us (Eph. 2.8-10). The Law of God is good (Rom. 7.12). What does this suggest about the role the Law should have in our discipleship?
3. Whom can you encourage today to love and good works (Heb. 10.24)?

*He beseeches God to exercise his goodness towards him, not by causing him to increase in riches and honors, or to abound in pleasures, but by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the law. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.68*

*Pray Psalm 119.65-67, 71, 72.*

Pray that God will help you understand which works are good works, and how to discern His good and perfect will for your life.

*Sing Psalm 119.65-67, 71, 72.*

(Open My Eyes: *Open My Eyes, That I May See*)

You have dealt well with me, O Lord, just as You promised in Your Word.  
Teach me good judgment, help me to know all that I need to love You so.  
Let Your commandments light my way. Send sweet affliction when I stray,  
that I may walk Your holy way and keep Your Word.

All my afflictions, Lord, I turn to You that I Your Law may learn.

*Psalm 119.65-72*

Teach me to hold Your Word in my heart, never from its true way to part.  
Your Law is better far to me than any wealth could ever be;  
open my eyes and let me see more of Your Word!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Why do we say that understanding goodness begins in knowing God and His Word?
2. How can the psalmist say that it “is good” for him to be afflicted? How should this counsel us in dealing with afflictions?
3. What does it mean to “delight” in the Law of God? How would someone recognize that you delight in God’s Law?
4. How can learning the Law of God help us to become good persons?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.