

Afflictions and Suffering

“And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven:
this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun;
and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
That which is crooked cannot be made straight:
and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.”

Ecclesiastes 1:13-15

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever:
nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it:
and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.”

Ecclesiastes 3:14

“Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?
In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider:
God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.”

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

Introduction:

1. This is one of the great philosophical questions of human existence – why so much pain and trouble?
2. We have the answer, and it is a great privilege and pleasure to speak on behalf of God (Job 36:1-4).
3. Most of the afflictions in any church are unknown, because they are a part of life of discreet people.
4. The Bible is a comforting manual for life from our Father in heaven to deal with all such exigencies.
5. Never forget or underestimate His everlasting love for you in spite of circumstances (Rom 8:28-39).
6. A trained response to affliction will keep you from fretting or rebelling against God (Job 1:20-22), and it will give you useful help for others in their tribulations (Pr 22:17-21; II Cor 1:4; I Thess 5:14).
7. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small (Pro 24:10), but this study is to build it.
8. There is very specific advice in the Bible about the proper perspective and response to tribulations.
9. A sinful world inhabited by sinful people provides a combination for afflictions of all kinds, often!
10. God's best have had many terrible and long-lasting afflictions e.g. Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Naomi, Hannah, David, Abigail, Hezekiah, Esther, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, the Thessalonians, and more.
11. If we aspire to be like David, the man after God's own heart, we must endure affliction like David.
12. If we are to be conformed to Jesus Christ, like Paul, then we should face affliction like our Lord did; we should embrace the opportunity for fellowship with Him experientially by suffering (Phil 3:10).
13. We use **affliction**, a Bible word, for the Bible words *affliction* (73), *afflictions* (13), *adversity* (10), *adversities* (2), *evil* (569), *evils* (8), *fear* (385), *fears* (4), *temptation* (15), *temptations* (8), *trial* (6), *pain* (24), *pains* (4), *persecution* (10), *persecutions* (4), *sorrow* (65), *sorrows* (22), *travail* (30), *trouble* (109), *troubles* (12), *vex* (15), *vexed* (22), *vexation* (14), *vexations* (1), etc.
14. These afflictions can be *hail damage*, *health issues*, *mechanical failure*, *financial problems*, *car accident*, *IRS audit*, *hot weather*, *employment difficulties*, *genetic weaknesses*, *strained relationships*, *red lights or slow drivers*, *marital unhappiness*, *moths or rust*, *need of a spouse*, *bad moods or forgetful minds*, *robbery*, *bad night of sleep or stubbing your toe*, *difficulty selling property*, *disobedient children*, *forgetful spouse*, *failing memory*, *loss of confidence*, *traffic ticket*, *stock market reversal*, *terrible parents and home life*, or about any problem in any part of life that you can imagine that tempts you to complain or give up and tests your character.
15. Sometimes our affliction can be hearing and seeing others unable to properly bear their afflictions!
16. Patience, the mark of perfection, is *cheerfully enduring negative events* (James 1:2-4; Rom 5:3-5).
17. If God gave us what we wanted when we wanted it, we would be spoiled brats without faith or other evidence of God's grace. It would destroy our souls. Embrace afflictions to glorify God and grace!
18. Following are many Bible reasons to understand, accept, appreciate, and beat life's trials and pain.

Afflictions are from God

- A. This is where we start, and it can be sufficient itself – He is First Cause of all things.
 - 1. He made all things for Himself and for His own pleasure (Prov 16:4; Rev 4:11).
 - 2. He governs the universe by His providence for His glory (Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11).
 - 3. Whether your genetic weaknesses or traffic on the way to work, He rules over all.
 - 4. Not a sparrow falls without His wise oversight, and He sees you (Matt 10:29-31).
 - 5. The less important you are with greater focus on Him will reduce any suffering.
- B. Our response should be as Job began and as Elihu warned in the book of affliction.
 - 1. Job began well ascribing all to God, worshipping, and no complaint (Job 1:21-22).
 - 2. Job justly corrected his foolish wife in devilish ignorance about evil (Job 2:10).
 - 3. In between were three miserable counselors that falsely interpreted Job's affliction, presuming as many do about themselves and others that afflictions are judgment.
 - 4. Elihu set the whole matter straight to Job, *God is greater than man* (Job 33:12-13).
 - 5. We admire Job, but to aspire to be like him takes godly patience past chapter two!
- C. There is absolutely no chance or fate involved in your afflictions – they are from God.
 - 1. If God cares for sparrows, then not the slightest circumstance is chance (Pr 16:33).
 - 2. Events large or small, past or present, in or out of your control, are under His rule.
 - 3. There are no real accidents or coincidences – they are always, only providences.
 - 4. Any event in your life was known to Him in eternity, and you should view it such.
 - 5. In faithfulness He will never send more than you can bear or escape (I Cor 10:13).
- D. We believe in the sovereignty of God, and this is one of its most helpful applications.
 - 1. You arrogantly and foolishly sin to even question birth without hands (Is 45:9-10).
 - 2. Like Job, we admit what we arrived with and what we leave with, by God's rule.
 - 3. He is in charge of you stubbing your toe or the affairs of pagan nations (Job 34:29).
 - 4. The issue of evil (affliction) is no controversy – it is always from God (Amos 3:6).
 - 5. God made man upright in Eden – we are the ones that ruined it (Ge 1:31; Ec 7:29).
- E. The devil cannot even afflict a herd of pigs without permission of God (Mat 8:31-32).
 - 1. Do not give Satan credit for things that he cannot do without express permission.
 - 2. Jehovah had strict parameters on the devil as the secondary cause of Job's grief.
 - 3. In each chapter of Job's trial (Job 1-2), the devil had strict boundaries to not cross.
- F. Knowing affliction is from God, for good reasons, should give us immediate comfort.
 - 1. If so, (1) He knows, (2) He limits, (3) He can remove, (4) He gives grace for them.
 - 2. He is the most faithful and loving Father, and so afflictions can be wisely accepted.
 - 3. If you think on Him, you can have perfect peace in trouble (Is 26:3-4; Ha 3:17-19).
 - 4. There is no reason for anxiety, fear, worry; turn affliction over to Him (Phil 4:6-7).
- G. Without affliction, how could we declare/display God's glory and His strength in us?
- H. For more of God's dominion ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.

Afflictions are for good reasons

- A. We go here second, and these two reasons are all you need – but the Bible says more.
- B. Anyone needing this study should consult a detailed outline of this point linked below.

- C. There are 4 reasons, with some sub-reasons, for why God sends affliction in our lives.
1. God sends affliction *for His glory*, as the man born blind (John 9:1-3), as Lazarus (Jn 11:1-4), or a poisonous viper (Acts 28:1-6), or Paul's thorn (II Cor 12:7-10).
 2. He sends affliction *for a trial of your faith* to perfect you like refining, as with Job (Job 1:12), as with Abraham (Gen 22:12), and with Jewish believers (I Pet 1:6-9).
 3. God sends it *for chastening to get you out of sin* and back with Him (Heb 12:5-13), as with David (II Sam 12:9-13), and Haggai (1:1-11), and Corinth (I Cor 11:30).
 4. He allows affliction *for natural results of your foolishness* (Pr 13:15), as in not training children (Pr 29:15), marrying poorly (Pr 30:23), or suretiship (Pr 11:15).
 5. All these reasons are positive for God and for the person suffering the affliction.
 6. God in infinite wisdom can combine these reasons in any combination He chooses.
 7. God will not leave you in the dark to be confused or overlook your transgression.
 8. David, after God's heart, a very afflicted man, knew this (Ps 119:67,71,75,49-50).
 9. Adversity is better than prosperity: it does more for your character and His glory.
- D. There may be other reasons that could be considered for a more comprehensive study.
1. God allows tribulation and comforts you in it for you to comfort others (II Co 1:4).
 2. God cannot display glory through you in prosperity like adversity (II Cor 12:7-10).
- E. Think ordinary process of life in a sinful world with sinful body among sinful people.
1. Our first parents rejected affliction-free living in Eden, by choosing Satan's death.
 2. Thus, we have a body that dies daily on its journey toward total physical shutdown.
 3. Thus, we have a heart and mind given to wildest lusts and dysfunctional thoughts.
 4. Thus, we live in a world under bondage of corruption and with violence prevalent.
 5. Thus, there are afflictions since Eden due to their sin – conception, childbirth, working the soil, earning a living, increased submission to husbands, etc.
 6. Getting sick or having deficient organs all the way up to death is all very ordinary.
 7. These are not acts of God – they happen often to everyone, just a little differently.
 8. Every person hearing this study will endure growing affliction all the way to death.
 9. It is foolish naiveté to fret about ordinary things as if they were not ordinary things.
 10. There are acts of God that are statistically significant as not being normal decay.
- F. For God's glory, you should (1) give Him all the glory joyfully at all times, (2) acknowledge His right to your life, while (3) using all reasonable means and prayer to remove the adversity.
- G. For trials of faith, you should (1) understand their value, (2) rejoice in their purpose, (3) be thankful for their effect, (4) learn the lesson quickly, and (5) cheerfully endure their pain.
- H. For chastening of sins, you should (1) pray for God to reveal your faults, (2) examine yourself carefully, (3) confess as soon as you have any conviction, (4) submit to reproof from others, and (5) tell God you have learned the lesson as quickly as possible.
- I. For consequences of folly, you should (1) obey God's word as early and fully as possible, (2) be prudent in all decisions, (3) beg God for mercy for your failures and stubbornness, and (4) use all means God has taught for your recovery.

- J. Judgment as punishment is His strange work, not His usual or desired work (Is 28:21), and it does not flow from His heart the same as do His favors and mercies (Lam 3:33), as every honest and sincere parent should understand in dealing with their children.
- K. Men join elite military units or sports teams, where they want affliction for perfection!
 - 1. They make careful comparison to what unit is the most stringent and demanding.
 - 2. There are constant comparisons of Navy Seals, Army Rangers, and Air Force FAC.
 - 3. They even seek out the hardest, most-driven coaches to get the best of themselves.
 - 4. An example is the parents that gave their daughters to Bela Karolyi from Romania.
 - 5. If men choose such difficulty and pain for natural perfection, can we rejoice at God's perfect distribution of difficulty and pain for our spiritual perfection?
- L. Do not blame God for gentle, kind, merciful consequences to your faults, folly, sins; for whatever chastening you have received is far, far less than you truly deserved.
- M. Do not complain about gentle, kind, merciful consequences to your faults, folly, sins; for if you are honest this is often the result of His great longsuffering and patience!
- N. Why bad things happen to Christians ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/why-bad-things-happen.pdf>.

Afflictions are for patience

- A. Patience is to endure negative events cheerfully, and it is a crowning grace of saints.
 - 1. It is the passive trait of a true saint proving eternal life by joy and hope in trouble.
 - 2. Love is the active virtue of a saint proving eternal life (I John 3:18-19; Gal 5:22).
 - 3. It is related to longsuffering (obviously), and it is to be had with joy (Col 1:9-11).
 - 4. Great men, like Paul, even pray for patience and pursue it zealously (Phil 3:8-10).
 - 5. It has enough faith to avoid fainting by hope in God (Ps 27:13-14; 31:24; 130:5).
 - 6. Consider Jeremiah's recall of facts about God to gender his hope (Lam 3:24-26).
 - 7. Hope is the cure by waiting, and our God is the God of hope (Rom 8:25; 15:13).
 - 8. Consider how Asaph turned himself around in the middle of Psalm 77 at verse 10.
- B. James taught you to count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations (Jas 1:2-4).
 - 1. Argue all you want against the rule here, but you argue against Almighty God.
 - 2. You must learn what is taught here so that you know it and embrace afflictions.
 - 3. Afflictions that test your faith have the consequence and product of patience.
 - 4. You must not fight the trial but rather wait on God through it to grow in patience.
 - 5. Patience makes you a perfect and complete Christian, so affliction is of great value.
- C. Paul added more dimensions to this lesson and rule of heavenly wisdom (Rom 5:3-5).
 - 1. You must glory in tribulations, like James 1:3, because you *know* why they come.
 - 2. Negative events test your faith to trust God and cheerfully stay faithful – patience.
 - 3. Cheerfully enduring negative events builds Christian experience and future hope.
 - 4. Your hope is never disappointed, because God declares His love throughout you.

Afflictions are never more than you can handle

- A. God never tempts a man in any way that he cannot bear by God's grace (I Cor 10:13).
- B. Here are precious rules and promises that ought to encourage you when tempted sore.
- C. This verse is here for saints intimidated or fearful by Israel's pitiful history in context.

- D. God is faithful – He rules temptations – He will not let you be tempted too hard.
 - 1. God does tempt men by creating difficult circumstances and situations (Ge 22:1-2).
 - 2. Because God rules temptations, pray to be lead away from them (Matthew 6:13).
 - 3. He remembers your frame when He tempts; so remind Him (Psalm 103:14; 13:3).
 - 4. God will always provide a way to escape every situation, so you can bear them.
- E. He has promised to never allow a temptation to exceed your strength (I Cor 10:13).
 - 1. This rule depends on His faithfulness, just as you trust it for forgiveness (I Jn 1:9).
 - 2. If you fear God, He will pity you as a good father pities children (Ps 103:13-14).
- F. Elihu taught Job this as one of the principles or rules of God's affliction (Job 34:23).
- G. Paul had more afflictions than you ever, but Christ strengthened him (Phil 4:11-13).
- H. None in scripture was destroyed by excessive trials, but many forfeited to easy trials.

Common to man

- A. Thinking you suffer more than others is a selfish temptation itself to sin. God denies!
- B. Though you feel your temptations are uniquely hard, they are equal to those of others.
 - 1. You may at times be tempted by trials or sin more than you are at other times.
 - 2. Others experience the same cycles of blessing and temptation toward them as well.
 - 3. Your temptation may differ in kind, but it does not differ much in draw or weight.
 - 4. The man with a broken bone (visible) must not despise her with a broken heart.
- C. There is only one Job, and you are not him. Do not tell yourself or anyone otherwise.

Affliction is no strange thing

- A. Do not let your flesh, the devil, or the world convince you of unique circumstances.
- B. When God allows/sends affliction in your life, it is not a strange thing (I Pet 4:12-16).
- C. Some want to think they are uniquely afflicted and deserve unique love from others.
- D. Jesus told apostles and Paul disciples of coming tribulation (John 16:33; Acts 14:22).

God knows your buttons

- A. The rich young ruler learned that Jesus knew his precise weakness (Matt 19:20-22).
- B. When things happen that really get to you, remember Who sent them in faithfulness.
 - 1. If there is anything you value close to Christ, He may well test you regarding it.
 - 2. Thus His warning to count the cost of hating all to follow Him (Luke 14:25-35).
- C. It is wise to not have buttons – things so important to you that they cause temptation.

Get rid of self-confidence

- A. The warning is simple – if you think you can stand, get ready for a fall (I Cor 10:12).
- B. The vicissitudes of Israel are the context; take their example to heart (I Cor 10:5-11).
- C. Solomon had warned several times about pride before a fall (Pr 16:18; 18:12; 28:14).
- D. Peter and apostles showed a painful lesson of thinking yourself strong (Mat 26:33-35).

Embrace the challenges of life

- A. If affliction is for our good, you should embrace challenges, which identify the strong.
- B. Only the weak faint in the day of adversity (Pr 24:10) – the strong will glorify God.
- C. As in other human endeavors, challenges accomplished separate you from other men.
- D. The hotter a fire to purify gold, the result is better; laying ore in the sun will not work.

Afflictions work together for good

- A. Paul gave the oft-referenced rule of Christian patience (Rom 8:28). Do you believe it?
- B. If you love God, then you are His elect, and He has a purpose for your life. Believe it!
- C. It is important to see the *all things as sufferings in the context* (8:17,26 and 8:35-36).
- D. Here is fabulous comfort for the children of God while suffering in this present world.
- E. All things afflicting us *work together* by His overruling providence and coordination.
- F. But not only do they work together, they work together for *good* by His definition.
- G. For more about Romans 8:28 ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/predestinated-and-persuaded.pdf>.

Prosperity does not work

- A. Riches and success lead to denying the Lord by presumed self-sufficiency (Pr 30:7-9).
- B. The Bible says when Jeshurun waxed fat, then He kicked against the Lord (De 32:15).
- C. Whether Bible history or personal history, we know that success does not build faith.
- D. You do not pray more during peace and prosperity, but during trouble and adversity.

Afflictions are useful

- A. You pray much more when you suffer pain or difficulties than when you prosper.
- B. You examine your life more carefully when adversity strikes than when success hits.
- C. Whether prosperity or adversity, you should consider your life carefully (Eccl 7:14).
- D. God told Israel that He would send affliction for them to seek Him (Hosea 5:15).

Afflictions allow you to glorify God

- A. If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small, and vice versa (Prov 24:10).
- B. You cannot show God's grace and power in strength like in weakness (II Co 12:7-10).
- C. It is the stony ground hearers that do not continue and endure affliction (Mark 4:17).
- D. Prosperity does not allow you to glorify God the same or to the degree as affliction.

Affliction is required for some blessings

- A. If you pray for patience, there is but one ordinary way God can give it – by affliction.
- B. If you pray to be closer to God, the most effective way is trouble to draw you to Him.
- C. If you want to glorify God like Paul, then understand suffering and death like him.
- D. Hezekiah and Jonah had never prayed more fervently than while in their afflictions.

Afflictions understood call for joy

- A. After Paul learned, he most gladly gloried and took pleasure in pain (II Cor 12:7-10).
- B. James exhorted his audience to count divers temptations as all joy (James 2:1-4).

- C. Paul taught the Romans the purpose and product of trials calls for glory (Rom 5:3-5).
- D. Christian maturity, for which we pray, suffers joyfully for Christ (Col 1:11; Phil 3:10).

Afflictions endured bring reward

- A. You know Job's end – God showed great pity and mercy to double Job (Jas 5:10-11).
- B. God knew exactly what He brought on Job and mercifully forgave his complaining.
- C. David, knowing God, endured Shimei's cursing for potential reward (II Sam 16:12).
- D. Leah believed her fertility was a blessing from God for her affliction (Gen 29:32).
- E. Jesus promised wonderful rewards to overcomers (Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7).
- F. Jesus Himself gave an example of seeing the reward to endure the pain (Heb 12:1-3).

God sees you in your trouble

- A. Never forget Hagar naming Jehovah, *Thou God Seest Me*; and not only did God see Hagar, but He also heard her as the context teaches; you are better (Gen 16:11,13).
- B. God saw the affliction of Israel in Egypt and heard their groaning (Ac 7:34; Ex 4:31).
- C. Though God is very high, He humbles Himself to behold your problems (Ps 113:4-8).
- D. Not only does He see you in your affliction, He is afflicted with you (Isaiah 63:9).
- E. He counts your wanderings, stores tears in a bottle, writes them in a book (Ps 56:8).

The LORD will deliver you

- A. He sends many afflictions on the righteous, yet they survive all of them (Ps 34:19)!
- B. David, in this very context, praised God for numerous deliverances (Psalm 34:4,6,17).
- C. If He breaks a bone literally, there is no great harm done metaphorically (Ps 34:20).
- D. David did not get Amnon, Absalom, or Adonijah but, but who cares (II Sam 23:1-5)!
- E. If He chooses death for your deliverance, you should consider it gratefully (Is 57:1-2).

He will give strength to those waiting courageously

- A. He will strengthen your heart, if you wait on Him and take courage in Him (Ps 27:14).
- B. Waiting works – trusting Him each day (Ps 27:14; Ps 31:24; Lam 3:24-26; Ps 130:5).
- C. If circumstances are bad, God can strengthen your heart (Ps 73:15-16; Hab 3:17-19).
- D. Waiting patiently is a product of faith, knowing He will deliver you (Ps 27:13; 37:7).

Do not labor or worry beyond reasonable effort

- A. If you do more than you should, He may see how you fare without Him (Ps 127:1-2).
- B. If you put faith in physicians, He may see it as lack of faith or rebellion (II Chr 16:12).
- C. Do not put confidence in the 32k, or God may reduce it to 10k or 300 (Judges 7:1-8).
- D. It is not your job to take full responsibility for any event or outcome. Let Him help!

Afflictions can be reversed gloriously

- A. Naomi (pleasant) thought her name rather Mara (bitter), but God blessed (Ruth 1:20).
- B. David lived in Gath fleeing from Saul, but he came away with Ittai and 600 Gittites!
- C. Manasseh was in a foreign prison, but his great humility put him back on his throne.

- D. God delivered Joseph from 13 years of affliction to be His ruler in Egypt (Acts 7:10).
- E. How can we deny that Peter was a better man after denying Christ for his perfection?

Afflictions can be shortened

- A. Job could have shortened his trial if he had more humbly accepted it (Job 36:16-18).
- B. Elihu had already elucidated the principles and rules of affliction to Job (Job 36:7-12).
- C. Jonah got himself out of a whale's belly by crying unto the Lord fervently (Jonah 2:2).
- D. Manasseh ended captivity in Babylon by humbling himself greatly (II Chr 33:12-13).

Afflictions can be prayed against

- A. Paul prayed against his thorn and was heard the best way possible (II Cor 12:7-10).
- B. Hannah asked the Lord for deliverance and promised a great vow to Him (I Sa 1:11).
- C. Sometimes a vow in affliction may be wise, but make sure you pay it (Eccl 5:4-5).
- D. Consider the prayer of Jabez, which was answered, against grief in life (I Chr 4:9-10).
- E. David prayed against his afflictions, and he reasoned from God's law (Ps 119:153).

Pigpen Profit

- A. There is profit in affliction, for lusting after corn husks got the prodigal's attention.
- B. You can be thankful for this rule in your life; you can pray for this rule in other lives.
- C. Song, *Afflictions of the Prodigal* ... http://www.hymnary.org/text/afflictions_though_they_seem_severe.
- D. Through the Bible, Israel's history to Manasseh in Babylon, pain produces repentance.
- E. David wrote that afflictions from God helped him pursue godliness (Ps 119:67,71,75).

Afflictions are actually blessings

- A. If the things written above are true, then afflictions prove God's love for your glory.
- B. They wean us from desiring and expecting too much from this sin-cursed world.
- C. They are the evidence God loves you, because He is perfecting and refining you.
- D. No wonder both Paul and James exhort to rejoice in them (Rom 5:3-5; Jas 1:2-4).

Afflictions here cannot be compared to eternity

- A. Every believer has a future that should put a diminishing perspective on his life trials.
 - 1. Peter taught believers to suffer joyfully in light of Christ's coming (I Pet 1:3-13).
 - 2. Even natural men have endured all sorts of things in the hope of coming rescue.
 - 3. The exploits of men at war, in prison camps, lost at sea, and so forth praise hope.
 - 4. But our hope annihilates their hope – for our hope is of eternal glory for eternity!
 - 5. Thus the martyrs could endure afflictions unto death in the most cheerful manner.
- B. Light affliction is nothing to exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Cor 4:16-18).
- C. Paul the accountant reckoned that sufferings are not worthy to be compared (Ro 8:18).
- D. A great reversal of fortune is coming to put your griefs here in the shade (Psalm 73).
- E. Hope is a great cure for fainting, fear, or fruitlessness – Christ is coming (I Co 15:58).
- F. Paul metaphorically, practically proved a resurrection by dying daily (I Cor 15:30-32).
- G. Thus, we must keep the resurrection in memory, lest we be miserable (I Cor 15:2, 19).

The ultimate affliction is the best ending

- A. Death is sucking the life out of every part of your body until it takes you down totally.
- B. Solomon described the evil days of old age and total corruption of body (Ec 12:1-7).
- C. This is the ultimate affliction of life, the promised judgment of Eden, but it is good.
- D. As a child of God, to depart and to be with Christ is far better, so even death is good.
- E. If you properly prepare for death, then lesser afflictions coming earlier are nothing.
- F. The martyrs had this perspective to make torture and death an easy thing. Copy them!

Faith is the remedy against fainting

- A. David would have fainted without believing to see God's goodness (Psalm 27:13).
- B. Talk to yourself to encourage yourself in God rather than despair (Ps 42:5,11; 43:5).
- C. David encouraged himself in the Lord when his case seemed hopeless (I Sam 30:6).
- D. Your best days on earth may be ahead ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/glory-days-ahead.pdf>.

His word is the response to affliction

- A. How do you preserve and promote faith – it comes by the word of God (Rom 10:17).
- B. Hope in God's word – His certain promises – should sustain us in trial (Ps 119:50).
- C. David said he would have perished in his affliction without God's word (Ps 119:92).
- D. The things written aforetime, in the Old Testament, are for learning hope (Rom 15:4).
- E. David encouraged himself in the Lord. How? Recall and meditate on the word (Ps 77).
- F. His promised presence is enough to overcome covetousness and fear (Heb 13:5-6).
- G. Bible hope is patient waiting (Rom 8:25), which is learned by scripture (Rom 15:4).
- H. Think Joseph's many years in Egypt, Moses' forty on the backside of the desert, and David's troubles between anointing as king and taking the throne of all twelve tribes.

Simplify your life

- A. If you have complicated your life, you have created your own situation for disaster.
- B. The busier you are the less time you have to be still and know He is God (Ps 46:10).
- C. The busier you are the more persons and things you have to torment you (Eccl 5:12).
- D. John, Anna, Jesus, and Paul rejected even marriage to avoid cares (I Cor 7:29-35).
- E. The closer you can be to God by a simpler lifestyle will prepare you for afflictions.

His worship

- A. There is comfort in God and Christ, both seen and heard in His temple – the church.
- B. If Asaph had not gone into the house of the Lord, he would have fallen (Ps 73:17-24).
- C. Acquaint yourself with God for peace, good, strength, joy (Job 22:21; Hab 3:17-19).
- D. There is comfort, encouragement, instruction, and warnings to be had in God's house.
- E. Just good singing done God's way will bear spiritual fruit for which it was intended.

The company is good

- A. Jesus told the apostles and Paul disciples about tribulation (John 16:33; Acts 14:22).
- B. You can be like Jesus and should be thankful for affliction (I Pet 4:12-16; Phil 3:10).

- C. Jesus described persecution as a blessing that also came on prophets (Matt 5:10-12).
- D. Think of great men and women – Joseph, Job, Hannah, David, Esther, John, Paul, etc.

Your response affects others

- A. Asaph was very cast down, but he knew he could not let his thoughts out (Ps 73:15).
- B. Remember the warnings about hurting others in matters of liberty (Romans 14:15,21).
- C. Even Paul was comforted by reports of faith in two churches (II Co 7:5-7; I Thes 3:7).

You are no bleeding martyr

- A. Hearing about martyrs as we did each Sunday in 2014, we must highly honor them.
- B. They have set an example for us to follow, though we are not tried at all as they were.
- C. Jesus specifically said that you have not yet resisted unto shedding blood (Heb 12:4).

Discouragement and fear are not sins

- A. Even Paul admitted being cast down, but he did not allow it to destroy him (II Co 4:9).
- B. David admitted his fears, but he gave us the remedy for them (Psalm 34:4; 56:3-4).
- C. The Psalms are David's journal by divine editing and inspiration for your comfort.

Continual feast by a merry heart

- A. Solomon taught attitude and choice are more important than circumstances (Pr 15:15).
 - 1. Paul did not say to rejoice when things are good, but to rejoice always (Phil 4:4).
 - 2. There are reasons to do so even in the midst of tribulations (Rom 5:3-5; Jas 1:2-4).
 - 3. All the points above in this study provide the information for faith to choose joy.
- B. Some live in misery by an afflicted mindset, others a continual feast by joy (Pr 15:15).
 - 1. Some born to complaining and unhappy parents and/or never corrected by parents, believe that constant thinking and speaking of problems is acceptable. God forbid!
 - 2. Some men cannot enjoy life due to choosing rather to be miserable (Job 21:23-26).
 - 3. You can find them easily, for they seldom or never give thanks on their own, but would rather tell you about their problems, and they always have problems to tell.
 - 4. You can also find them with a sad face, for they have no merry heart (Pr 15:13); if you ask them about their sad face, they will excuse it by their problems. Wretches!
 - 5. Even rich men may eat in their darkness with much sorrow and wrath (Ecc 5:9-17).
 - 6. How you perceive or respond to affliction is a choice to be learned by God's word.
- C. You can choose to slight your afflictions and exalt your blessings by God's grace.
 - 1. Understanding is a wellspring of life to those that have it, so get it (Prov 16:22).
 - 2. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, so choose a merry heart (Prov 17:22).
 - 3. Do not be like Jacob, refusing to be comforted and complaining (Gen 37:35; 47:9).
 - 4. Paul gave two great comparisons slighting afflictions (Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:16-18).
 - 5. It is a choice unrelated to circumstances to choose joy over sorrow (II Cor 6:3-10).
 - 6. In spite of providential trials and heaviness, there is reason to rejoice (I Pet 1:6-9).
 - 7. Habakkuk ended his prophecy with total economic failure and joy (Hab 3:17-19).
 - 8. Instead of thinking about your difficulties, give thanks for everything (I The 5:18).

- D. It is our duty and privilege to help others have a merry heart (Pr 12:25; 15:13; 18:14).
- E. Old age naturally denies pleasure (Ec 12:1), but you can choose over it (II Sa 23:1-5).
- F. Every believer has a future that should put a diminishing perspective on his life trials.
 - 1. Men and women have survived all kinds of pain and suffering far worse than you.
 - 2. Consider the martyrs as a category of Christians that endured some real afflictions.
 - 3. But no matter how bad your life trials, they are nothing compared to eternal glory.
 - 4. Make an accounting comparison for weight and time (II Cor 4:16-18; Rom 8:18).
- G. For more about Proverbs 15:15 ... http://www.letgodbettrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/15_15.php.

Conclusion:

- 1. What is a bad response to affliction? *Fretting against the Lord, backsliding from the Lord, blaming the Lord or others, complaining about your situation, neglecting your spiritual duties, envying those not suffering, expecting sympathy from others, being a bad example, or resenting this preaching!*
- 2. Let God's word be true and all men liars in life troubles – *count afflictions all joy and glory in them.*
- 3. Recall that they best display God's grace in your life and are for your perfection in the sight of God.
- 4. Recall the principles and rules of the Bible – *knowing that* (Rom 5:3) ... *knowing this* ... (Jas 1:2-4).
- 5. Kingdom greatness and conforming to Christ is by *patience* – cheerfully enduring negative events.

For Further Study:

- 1. Sermon outline ... *Why Bad Things Happen to Christians* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/why-bad-things-happen.pdf>.
- 2. Sermon outline ... *Enduring Affliction* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/enduring-affliction.pdf>.
- 3. Sermon outline ... *When Things Seem Hopeless* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/when-things-seem-hopeless.pdf>.
- 4. Sermon outline ... *Godly Priorities* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/priorities2.pdf>.
- 5. Proverb commentary ... *Proverbs 15:15* ... http://www.letgodbettrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/15_15.php.
- 6. Sermon slides ... *Patience for Perfection* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/patience-for-perfection.pdf>.
- 7. Song ... *Afflictions of the Prodigal Son* ... http://www.hymnary.org/text/afflictions_though_they_seem_severe.
- 8. Song ... *Preservation; Cast Down But Not Destroyed* ... http://www.hymnary.org/text/now_in_thy_praise_eternal_king.