

There is a story by an unknown author about a father sharing a meaningful life lesson with his daughter. One that carries a profound spiritual application which I will end the story explaining it that way. So imagine with me placing three different items into a pot of boiling water. An egg, a raw potato, and a tea bag. The egg goes into the boiling hot water. Goes in fragile, but it comes out hard. A hard-boiled egg. Then the raw potato goes in hard and firm, but comes out soft and brittle under the heat of adversity. In contrast, the tea bag responds completely different. Rather than being overcome by the heat, it rather draws out a rich flavor that is hidden inside. Transforming the surrounding hot water and turning what is within into something fragrant.

Now here's a spiritual application to this. The boiling water doesn't change the nature of the tea bag. What it does is when it's placed inside the boiling pot, the boiling water reveals what is inside. Every one of us will face, as it were, boiling water situations. And these external circumstances are constantly changing like boiling water in this life. You can be in a season of sickness, season of financial strain, season of great grief. It's easy to raise our hands in praise to God when things are good, when our bank accounts are full, the family is healthy, and it's as it were smooth sailing. But what happens when affliction strikes? Many believers struggle with this deep tension. What happens when things don't go all right? You may ask, "If God is good, why is my life so hard right now? How he has forgotten me in this time of grief or financial strain or seasons of sickness?" The answer to the first is because God is good. Ultimately, the trials he has placed on your life, child of God, it is for a purpose, and that is for his ultimate good, for his glory rather, and for your ultimate good. The second is a definite no. He has not forgotten you. Not through your afflictions.

When we open the 10th stanza of Psalm 119, which could mean a variations in words meaning well, good, or even a better situation, we hear the voice of a man, the psalmist, who was surrounded by the boiling water of life, by slander, by arrogance, and painful trials within, and trials without. Yet he opens his prayer with a radical declaration. Let us listen to him. Please stand. As you will out of respect for God's word and follow along in your Bible as I read from Psalm 119:65-72. And I want you to pay attention to the words well, good, and better in this stanza. Let us begin.

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now have I kept thy word. Thou art good and doest good. Teach me thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me. But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease. But I delight in thy law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. May God bless the reading of His word. You may be seated.

Tonight, God's word invites us to discover how God uses our hardest seasons to draw us closer to His heart, namely His word and His character. Let us look at the first two verses then, verses 65 and 67. The purpose of affliction is to correct our misguided directions. Looking at verse 65 to 66 says this, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant." The psalmist begins by saying, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according meaning agreeing, aligning with thy word."

Notice his humility here. He calls himself thy servant. If you haven't already known, this is something that is repeated throughout the book of Psalms in totality, but here are particular, just in chapter 119 out of the 22 stanzas that we're going through, it's repeated 13 times, more than half. So, this is something to pay particular attention to. He is acknowledging that he is in absolute submission to God. Every time he's saying thy servant, he's saying, "I am absolute submission to you, your word." According to your word. Defining his personal relationship with God here. And he acknowledges that everything God has done in his life is good. He can sum it up with the one word, good. And his word helps him to perfectly align his will to his word.

I just in my time, in my study here, looked up the word, how many times this word according unto is repeated in the book of Psalm 119. I looked up how many times it said to thy word or upon his character, like loving kindness, judgments, precepts, statutes. And it's repeated 18 times in 22 stanzas, more than half of chapter 119. This goes to show that we need to constantly be corrected as brothers and sisters in Christ. See, we were not just corrected here and there. No, this is a continuation process. Sanctification process. So, it's good to pay attention to when God is correcting with his word is because you are his child. Don't we correct our children with words, not by emotions of anger? Think about that. The best kind of correction is words. Stop. Listen. Be quiet. And so on. Now, look at verse 66. Here, he turns from the word to prayer. This is often a consistency in book of Psalms. Reading word of God must include prayer. So, he goes on and he says, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge." There's the first instance of good. But, I want us to focus in also good judgment. Judgment here literally refers to taste. You judge the taste, as it were. The taste of what, you may ask? The capacity to distinguish from sweet from sour. Something that doesn't really taste the same. Or avoiding poison. The taste of poison. The psalmist isn't just asking for a head knowledge. He's asking that it would affect him physically in his appetite, in his taste buds, as it were. He's asking God to calibrate his spiritual palate. So, he can discern this is it, here, truth from error. And good from evil. So, that's something that we need to constantly gauge as we walk with the Lord is how is he showing me truth from error? How is he showing me from that which is good and that which is from evil? He is constantly wanting us to grow in this state of mind so that we can be spiritually mature.

Then he goes on in verse 67, he shares a before and after testimony. He says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray. I've just moved off the right path, rather. But now he says, "I have kept thy word." Interesting. Here it's as of watching a sheep wandering off of the shepherd's path. And by no means the path that the shepherd puts the shepherd in is sparse. It is an abundant field. In Psalm 23, it says that there's grass as green as can be. But we have a common colloquial expression that the grass is greener on the other side. And oftentimes you wander thinking the grass is greener on the other side, don't we? And what is that feeling that you may associate that to? Discontent? False illusion? Oh, it's better on that side or you envy someone. Somebody has a bigger house than you, a nicer car, nicer clothing, or whatever. Something external has now interrupted the eternal relationship with your God. So here the psalmist admits that ease and prosperity was the thing that led him away from God. Right? That's the opposite of affliction. Opposite of affliction is ease. You can look at it that way in the text. And here's the thing, the root word for affliction is to be humbled. Is to be humbled. You see, when you're a

child of God, he's going to keep you humbled. If he sees any signs of pride in your heart, he's going to humble you. He's going to humble you and he's going to send affliction to you. You see, affliction to the true child of God is the way the shepherd's crook gently ultimately steers you back into the fold. God used painful circumstances, here's the thing, to separate the sin out of your life, the sin of pride. That's what he's doing. And it's a painful process to be humbled. Because you see, he hates the sin in your life. He doesn't want your soul to be consumed with sin. That's his love for you. Do you see affliction as his love for you? He knows if you're off the path. You see, in our sin, we don't know we're off the path. This expression being lost. Lost means you don't know what direction you're going. And God is the one that ultimately puts us back gently, back to the right path. Think of it as this way. I'm sure many of you have been afflicted in the body. But imagine someone that is recovering from a major knee surgery. This is someone that was a strong athletic type and he has used up his knees a lot in the way that he needed major knee surgery. Now, the physical therapist, if he is a good one, will push him to his limits, will stretch those muscles, stretch those legs so they will be flexible, and cause real physical discomfort in this process. As an outsider looking at this, not knowing what is going on, it will look painful and harsh at that. But the patient endures it because they know the short-term pain produces long-term mobility, right? That's the goal of the physical therapist and the surgery. So affliction is God's spiritual physical therapy, as it were. It may hurt in the moment, the short term, but its purpose is to restore your spiritual strength and alignment with His word. Restore and alignment. Think of another way. A lot of us are familiar with this if we have driven a car for some time. There are these strips called literally rumble strips. They're the strips that literally have those caps, right? That are annoying if you hit them. But in the shock of hitting those rumble strips, you may be shocked and shaken, and feel unpleasant in the moment, but that shock saves your life, right? It saves your life by waking you up before you crash into a ditch. You see, affliction is God using us like a rumble strip. When we're driving off course, He will shock us in the temporary situation. Whenever we into self-sufficiency or compromise and sin, God allows trials to shock us back into alertness. That's the key, to be alert. So, we stay on his path, namely his word keeps us alert. Remind yourself to not allow yourself to measure God's love purely by your immediate comfort because that is wrong. Like I said, short-term pain for long-term benefits. If you're experiencing a trial right now in the short-term, don't ask why is God doing this to me? Do you see that in the psalmist? No, he starts off with I'm your servant. I haven't submitted to you completely. And maybe in this area of my life, this season of my life. So, instead you phrase it and say ask Lord, what are you teaching me through this? What are you teaching me through this? I need to learn what I don't know. You must teach me. Where have I gone astray? Where do I need to be humbled in my life? He wants you to be humbled in all areas of life. Not just in one area of life, all areas of life, all seasons of life. And how is this trial guiding me back to his word? He said the trial will bring you back to the word of God if you're a child of God. You won't be caught up in your emotions. You'll stay there for maybe temporarily, but you will always be restored by God's word and in prayer. Just like the psalmist. So, with that said you see the purpose of affliction. Now, let's look at verses 68 to 70. The priority in affliction. The unwavering here is the devotion to trusting God's character. Trust God's word. Now you trust God's character. Verse 68, "Thou art good and doest good. Teach me thy statutes." Here the psalmist makes a foundational declaration. Doesn't change. God does good because God is good. God's nature doesn't change. When our circumstances falls apart, the

psalmist does not accuse God for his pain or his suffering or his trials. No, instead he reaffirms God's character and asks once again to be taught by his character. He is good. He is always good. And then verse 69, "The proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep thy precepts with my whole word." The word forged here implies the arrogant devising a character assassination, devising falsehoods over his reputation. Namely this, that he's trusting God with his or her whole heart. Not partial heart, but a whole heart. That's when the enemy attacks, isn't it? When you truly trust God with your whole heart, watch Satan attack you. But know this, God is good. God is always good. And he's going to use this purpose for again, his glory and for your ultimate good. So instead of retaliating or seeking vindication, the psalmist responds by doubling down from what he already has said with his word. He goes on with his character that I'm going to obey your character with my whole heart. That's how he's doubling down here. You see, you wait for God's intervention. You wait for God's vindication. Or he comforts you during the false accusations. He'll do one or the other. He'll stop the mouths of whoever's accusing you, or he will comfort you in your affliction. He does that consistently. Then look with me the contrast of hearts in verse 70. He says, "Their heart, the ones that are forging lies, is as fat as grease, but I delight in thy law." Here the expression for a fat heart represents a heart that pictures here a very callous, insensitive, and ultimately hardened by earthly comfort. You see, these are people that are enjoying life. They're just so comfortable in this life, and they see you, like Job, afflicted. And what God is doing this because he's sending judgment to you. God is doing this because he's just not good. Or whatever type of accusations they may be doing. Again, this is assuming that this is a child of God, and that he is being afflicted for good reasons. And those people that are callous, that are hardened, only seek earthly comfort. And so, they are dead spiritually. They have no care, no concern over the soul. They only care about the flesh. But you see, this child of God cares more about his soul than the flesh. Because the Lord Jesus said, "What would you give in exchange for your soul?" And we said, "Nothing." Nothing for this world, right? See, while the proud are isolated from the divine truth, meaning they're blind to the truth, the psalmist finds deep tender-hearted joy in the word of God. He says, "I delight in thy law." As opposed to them, they don't. They don't find delight. You find delight. You find joy even in your afflictions. Yeah, it's a paradox. But God is not bound by our time, our space, not the way we think. Amen. Think of it this way. There's a situation that happens with the heart. And I may get this pronounced right, but it's called arteriosclerosis. And it literally is a term in medicine when fat builds up around the heart. The blood flow is restricted and the organ loses its sensitivity and ability to function. Oftentimes due to the comfort of poor diet and lack of exercise. Worldly prosperity and unhealthy choices lead also to spiritual arteriosclerosis. A heart where fat as grease that no longer feels conviction of sin, no longer delights in the truth of God. What affliction does then is often the scalpel that God uses to strip away the spiritual fat on your heart so you your heart can then be passionately again and delight in him once again. You see, that's God's purpose in your life. He wants your heart to be sensitive to God's conviction of sin, to be sensitive to experiencing joy in your afflictions. See, when individuals tell lies that this is not the way God works about you and your personal trials, remember, get this point from these verses. Don't change your devotion to match their hostility. You keep going on. If you are spending time in the word, spending time in prayer, and you're experiencing affliction, there are purpose behind all of that. Don't go and just now start getting into the hostility yourself. Feeling the rage that they feel raged and the bitterness that's in their heart, the callousness towards

God. No, now you double down with your whole heart, amen? You devote to him with your whole heart. You refuse to let slander, personal hardship harden your heart. Anchor your mind on this truth. See, the believer in Christ, you will agree that God is good all the time, like I mentioned, what he is doing in your life right now. Whatever you're experiencing right now in this room, he is good. You can repeat that over yourself. Now, let's look at verses 71 and 72. Now, the psalmist transitions here in these start two particular verses, he finds treasure in his affliction. He goes from experiencing joy to this oh, it's worth more than anything in this world. He discovers the supreme value of scripture. Look at with me in verse 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes. Notice he does not say here in this first verse of 71 rather. He doesn't say affliction felt good to him. Affliction never feels good. But that's not the purpose. Here he says it was good for him. Do you see the difference? You see we can pay so much attention to the feelings of our afflictions instead of just acknowledging he is good. We got to ignore many times the pain that comes to affliction for what's better which is higher which is understanding that he is good. Affliction was a lesson where God's word moved from his head to his heart, to his feet, to his mouth, to everything. Martin Luther based on this verse remarked affliction was his schoolmaster for understanding scripture. Meaning that he would did not understand scripture without affliction. This is part of the Christian life. And for us to understand more of scripture, in fact we have to learn more in our afflictions. Being humbled, you will agree with what God says in his word. That's my comment. You see when you're in a place where you are humble where you're bowing before God in his word and his character out of respect how do you think God's going to speak to you with that frame of mind? Oh, it's going to be clear, isn't it? You will hear his voice above all other voices, including yourself. You won't be so focused on the pain but rather focusing on his word and his character. So that's the time to not look inward, but to look outward. Behold your God. Verse 72. Here it is. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. The psalmist looks at all the material wealth that he has in possession. All that the world can offer even in his imagination. The thousands of pieces of gold and in silver. He's entertaining that in his mind. Whatever that may be for you. May not be gold and silver. Whatever. Think about and imagine what this world can offer. Maybe the whole world like Jesus says. It's not more valuable than your soul. However. So he declares here that the word coming directly from God's mouth is infinitely more precious by the word better. Infinitely. Money can buy comfort to your flesh. That is true. But only God's word can bring comfort to your soul. Only God's word can bring comfort to your soul. There's a term called hyperinflation. It literally is where the dollar loses its purchasing power. So think of it this way. In a hyperinflation market, what we're paying \$5 per gallon can jump up to \$12 to \$13 a gallon overnight. And it will just keep going higher and higher from there on out. During hyperinflation, again, paper currency is destroyed by the loss of purchasing power because of prices. But pure gold retains its true worth of purchasing power. Anywhere in the world and it typically will actually go up in value than go down. Why do I use this? Because earthly wealth and status and physical health are fluctuating like currencies. And you know what? They can vanish in an instant and become vanished overnight. But the law of God's mouth is better even here it is than gold and silver. Okay, good gold is good for this earth, for this world. We're talking about something infinitely more valuable and worth way more than gold. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. Psalm 19:10 says this, "More to be desired are they." Speaking of God's word, "than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the

honeycomb." God's word is infinitely more valuable and brings greater delight than even the sweetest physical pleasures of gold and of honey. Two things that are the most pure and the most sweetest. They are pure. They are pure. Evaluate what you value most then. Would you trade your Bible and your walk with God right now for a bank account filled with millions, perhaps billions, perhaps trillions of dollars? Go run with your imagination. Is that worth more than God's word and your walk with God? If your heart values ease over truth, ask God to give you the eyes of faith to see that his word, the truth, is better than gold. For it is better than gold. Turn with me to Acts chapter 2 verses 23 to 24. Not to just focus on ourselves and what God is doing, but let's focus on what God did to Jesus. Acts chapter 2 verse 23 24. God's word says this, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain whom God hath raised up." These are the words of Peter at Pentecost. Look at what he proclaimed here. The greatest affliction didn't happen to you or to me. The ultimate affliction happened to Jesus Christ and was perpetrated by here notice wicked hands. Perpetrated by human hands, wicked hands. The death of the sinless, the pure, the truth, the perfect son of God was used by God to bring about the ultimate good for us and the ultimate glory for God. And what is it? Our eternal salvation. There's nothing more worth than being saved. In our text, the psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." And in Isaiah 53:6, reminds us, "As we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We were the ones wandering away in our our pride. But Jesus Christ, who knew sin, no pride, entered the furnace of affliction on our behalf. He was slandered by proud men, mocked, bruised for our iniquities, our sin, and was nailed and hung to a rugged tree. Here, I want us to think. Why did he endure that ultimate trial? See, that was the ultimate trial. Let's not get caught up so much on our trials. Let's focus now on the ultimate trial. See, because God turns the greatest suffering, the greatest affliction into the highest redemption. The highest redemption. You see, when you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you see what it took for our salvation. Through Christ's resurrection and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, we are not merely given a set of rules to follow on our own. No, we are given a new heart that can truly obey God and please God and glorify him. See, a tender heart, a humbled heart that delights in his instructions and trust his goodness even through much tears, can always go back to the ultimate affliction portrayed on the greatest and the most purest sinless son of God. You see, that's where we need to go ultimately. We need to go beyond our afflictions, beyond just the written word, not just God's character, but to know God. It's not good enough to just know about God. You have to know God personally. You have to, as it were, sense what he has done for you. Brothers and sisters in Christ, to know the weight of the sin that was placed and on Jesus Christ, where he had to hung on a cross for several hours, and out of his mouth, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Who else can do that for us? Who else can endure so much affliction than the Lord Jesus Christ? That's the place we need to go to. That's where we need to return back to again and again. That's where we need to go with the word. That's where we need to go with God's character. Through our afflictions. Because that is where God wants us to be. He wants a real relationship. Brothers and sisters, we need to have this real relationship with Christ. We need to really sense how good we have it. So that you can take your eyes off of this world. You can't take your eyes off of this world by your own strength. You can only do so by looking at the crucified one. Know what he had to do or to get you to a place where you are where you can experience affliction because he was afflicted for

you. He was first afflicted for you. He loved you before you can love him by dying on the cross for your sins. So, we need to go back to this place. That's how you can stay humble. Bow at the bow at before Jesus. Allow him to speak to you again and again of what he has done for you. Remind yourself of these things and you will stay on the right path. You will grow in the grace and knowledge of who Jesus Christ. This is a disciple of Christ. And you step into this place where you're in his presence. And then you see One person said this. Entertainment is a cheap substitute for true joy in the Lord. Are you really experiencing joy in the Lord? Or are you fooling yourself with entertainment of this world? You see, the more entertainment we see in the world the less we see Satan working. We don't need to be entertained by entertainment. We just need to be in in God's presence. We just need to experience him. And all this stuff that's around us will not even compare to the joy in the Lord. That's where you want to be. Brothers and sisters in Christ, that's where you want to be. Delight in him. Delight in him and enjoy him. Enjoy this communion. He reconciled us to God for a purpose. What was that purpose? Right, he we clothe us in righteousness. Why did he say that? Why did God say he need to clothe us in righteousness? Because he couldn't see us in our sin. So, Jesus did not only die for our sin, but he clothed us in his righteousness so that we can be in communion as if you were Christ himself. Joint heirs. I said this in the in the morning. We are joint heirs with Christ. Here's our elder brother. He did what no man could do. No friend can do. No greater love than did this. And a friend lays down his life for his brethren. There's no greater friend like Jesus. There's no one that you can trust more than Jesus. And there's no greater fellowship than you can have with God in Christ. Then what he has done for you. Cultivate this. I'm here in Psalm 119. I just want to end here. The reason why I'm going to Psalm 119 is because we're getting into that place of consistency. That you're not satisfied with just a head knowledge. That you're not just satisfied with, "Okay, I had my devotion time. Now I can go and play." But that you leave in the presence from God to going, "I want to stay there." "I can't wait to get back to that place." That's the difference. That's a believer in Christ. That is truly revived, truly close to the Lord. Let us be a people like that. Amen. Let's pray. Father, I have said plenty of things, Lord. I don't want to rest until, Lord, we move in that direction, Lord, in our church. Your church, God. But I pray that you would move into the minds and our hearts of our people to get past the shallowness of much of Christianity today. God, there's so many so-called Christians falling into pornography, falling into so much entertainment of this world, just living just like the world. They don't really have a reality with you, God. They don't really delight in you, Lord. They've given up so much for so little. And I don't want that for your church, God. You don't want that for your people. So, Father, please work the only way you can work. Break the fallow ground. Bring back the first love of every one, the brothers and sisters in Christ here. Show them that you are better than thousands of gold and silver. There is no one like you. There is no one like you, Father. Please, Father, bless this to our hearts. May the word of God be grafted into our hearts and bring the life that we so desperately need. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.