



# **Lights and Perfection, Inc.**

**Go and make disciples!**

E-votional 69

## **Afflicted Learning**

Psalm 119:71-72 (ESV),

*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.*

As I am reading this, I am at this very moment reflecting and looking at my own life to see how and where this passage is or has been evident in my life. At first, glance, when we read this passage, I am sure we question and ask, why do I need to go through affliction to learn God's ways and statutes? Well, if this is your question, you may be in good company. I say this because often time we fall into a trap where we feel that this Christian journey is about us and what we think it should be. On top of this, it is in our sin nature to want things to go smoothly in this life. For this reason, when things get difficult we either feel that we did something wrong to deserve this or God has somehow deserted us. Or like many others, we can get bitter because the way we thought it should have gone down didn't pan out quite the way we thought it should. But to answer the question of, why do I need to go through affliction to learn God's ways and statutes? Well, to put it very simply, read this passage of Scripture in Hebrews 5:8 (ESV),

*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what He suffered.*

So the answer here is that Jesus did, so why do we think we are exempt? Listen, this doesn't mean that all of our earthly existence is going to be filled with affliction. Yet at the same time affliction is relative. It is relative because while Jesus rather chose to go through such an afflicted time, He did it for the joy that was set before Him, even despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). This relative point of view was that affliction in relation to what is being accomplished pales the affliction itself to a lesser degree than that of what is being produced through it. Very simply, it is as Paul said here in Romans 8:18 (ESV),

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Now, I would like to also show that James mentioned that we should actually count it joy when we fall into divers temptations or various trials (James 1:2). His reasoning for this was found in the following two verses, take a look.

James 1:3-4 (ESV),

*for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Praise God! The overall purpose of these afflictions is to mature us to be, “*perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*” Now, concerning Jesus, we know that He was the spotless lamb of God and was perfect. And absolutely, He is now and was while on the earth. So why are we relating learning through afflictions to Him? Well, great question. The answer is that Jesus was not exempt from making godly choices. Many of these choices went against the grain of the flesh part. This must be why the writer of Hebrews said, “*he learned obedience through what he suffered.*” Although He was 100 percent, God, He was also 100 percent man. And that man part needed to make God type decisions or He would not have been going to the cross. On top of this, He had to do it willingly. This point is referenced from Hebrews 10:5-10 (ESV),

*Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

A major illustration, that, by the way, is one of my favorites is that of Jesus being tempted by the devil to take an easy way out. Check out Matthew 4:1-4 (ESV),

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

Jesus in this reference was obviously in serious need of food but instead of using His authority to take the easy way out, He chose affliction and relied on God’s

Word. In other words, He truly learned obedience and the way of God's statutes by what He suffered and the afflictions He was led through. What is really interesting about this situation here is the exact Word Jesus quoted. This passage came from Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (ESV),

*"The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."*

The Word that Jesus chose was one where God was reminding the children of Israel to remember how He led them through the wilderness for 40 years and even humbled them and let them hunger. He did this as the Scriptures say, *"that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."* Do you see the exact similarities here with what happened to Jesus in Matthew 4:1-4?

Praise the Lord! Truly then, it is good for us that we are afflicted at times, so that we might come to know the Lord and His statutes. Remember knowing something has more to do with an intimate knowing rather than a knowing about. In afflictions or divers temptations we truly learn and come to know God's Word in very real and tangible ways. I can honestly say that although I feel at times frustrated when going through a trial, there seems to be this quiet joy and anticipation in my heart that says, *"yeah, I know this hurts, but God is doing something in me and quite possibly setting the stage for what He is going to do through me and for His glory alone."* This same thing can and does apply to you as well. Hallelujah!

Lord, no matter what we are going through, we simply give You praise and glory. We are not our own and have been called by You to go and make disciples. We pray for the fullness of Your Spirit in our lives that we might keep in step with You and Your plans for our lives and Your Kingdom. We further pray that You open our eyes wide to always be able to see that it is Your Word above all else no matter what we may encounter along this pilgrims way. In Jesus name. Amen.

In Christ's Love,  
Chris and Jeanne

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