

#9 Northside Natter

20 May, 2020

Today I thought I'd take a peek at **Affliction**.

We are all afflicted with troubles during our walk in the Lord. The biggest difference that I have found is how I deal with that affliction. Before I was in the Lord, I would have ranted and raved and cried "*Why does this have to happen to me. It's so unfair!*" But being in the Lord brings with it a sense of maturity and responsibility along with patience. Those three things don't come the instant we step out of the waters of baptism. Nor do they magically arise the second we need them. No, they don't. They must be practiced ... and practiced.

Psalm 119:71

⁷¹ It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes.

The more we are afflicted, brothers and sisters, the more we become responsible for our life's direction. The more we are afflicted, the more we exercise patience in adversity, and the more we mature into our walk in the Lord. Affliction shapes and moulds us into who the Lord would have us to be. Affliction helps us to recognise '*God-opportunities*' in what we are experiencing. We can't let the person we used to be rise up and take over. We have a responsibility to react maturely, in Faith, in God's Way and in a way that maintains our testimony.

No longer are we that person who first listened to the Word faithfully preached. We are a new creation in Christ. We are tagging along with our big Brother learning how to get through life as he did. The century may be more technologically advanced than his, but the problems are the same.

Afflictions (*pain, suffering, distress*) that we might see or experience are:

1. Oppression of widows, spouses or employees
2. A loved one's self-affliction: drug and alcohol abuse to ease the emotional pain
3. Persecution by ungodly men who would rid this world of God
4. Financial affliction caused by unscrupulous organisations and aggressive companies
5. Years of physical, emotional and mental abuse by a close family member
6. War abuses and crimes against humanity, including terrorism
7. Heavy burdens that seem too heavy to bear
8. Nastiness of neighbours making home life unbearable
9. A soured close relationship with someone in the fellowship
10. A debilitating physical illness that cannot be cured or is considered terminal
11. A natural disaster that leads to homelessness (cyclone, fire, flood, tsunami, termite infestation)
12. A pandemic or more localised epidemic
13. Robbery resulting in the loss of a great many possessions
14. Death of loved ones leaving us in financial or emotional distress
15. Someone taking you to court over a matter they refused to resolve another way

I'm sure you could think of others not listed here. Many afflictions we experience can also be minor ones, even though they are no less distressing, for example:

My sister-in-law has MS and to help ease her daily pain and release her body strength for the day, she goes to a swimming pool built into the rocks at her secluded local beach. During COVID lock-down she was refused the use of this salty pool even though she was the only person there first thing each morning. She explained to authorities (in several letters to each one) why she needed the activity and how important it was to her health (valid medical reasons), but they refused to listen. She is, however, permitted to go shopping with 50 other people in the narrow local grocery store. She is afflicted.

The power of prayer will see our afflictions short-lived. We praise and thank God for these afflictions because of what they teach us – how to be more like Christ. He was afflicted through persecution, rejected by his own neighbours, oppressed by his own people and forced out of a synagogue. He was continually threatened by powerful leaders and eventually murdered by them. He is our example and that example is – *"forgive them, father, for they know not what they do."*

Man has no understanding whatsoever of how his actions affect others, let alone how they affect himself. But we understand. We know the consequences and we can see what is happening the world over, as well as in our own local area. We see the big picture. We have the tools to deal with it all and not fear where it is all headed. We have the promises of God to keep going and to trust in him. We have the testimonies of his power. We are witnesses that he exists and is alive today. We have proof that he is working in our lives.

If you are afflicted, brother or sister, seek the Lord now. Then ask the church for prayer. Remember to act as Christ would and uphold your testimony in all you say and do. You will be victorious!