

VICTORY IN AFFLICTION

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

Everyone experiences affliction. But it is a confusing subject for many, especially for Christians who soon discover that **it is a common occurrence** in their lives.

This booklet offers a concise study of the reasons for affliction in the believer's life.

Before we start, let us pray that the Lord will give us understanding, and will quicken the scriptural keys for finding victory in all our afflictions.

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WHAT IS AFFLICTION?

Affliction is a broad term which includes many forms of adversity such as **trials, tribulations, persecution, mental and emotional stress, and even physical suffering.**

The Bible's word of affliction traces its original meaning back to an Assyrian form of torture. The Assyrians were a nation, during the Old Testament period, who were continual enemies with Israel. They were fond of torturing some of their prisoners by staking them to the ground and slowly piling rocks on them until they were crushed to death under the weight of the stones.

The Greeks adopted the meaning of this form of torture into their language. The word **“affliction”** came to mean, **“the pressure and stress of unfavorable circumstances which befall a person’s life.”**

This same word is translated tribulation, persecution, troubled, burdened, and pressed in different passages. For example:

- “We were **burdened** beyond measure . . . ” (II Cor. 1:8).
- “We are **hard pressed** on every side . . . ” (II Cor. 4:8)
- “I am exceedingly joyful in all our **tribulation**” (II Cor. 7:4).

As we can see, affliction includes many forms of adversity.

THE PROBLEM WITH AFFLICTION

Many Christians do not understand why afflictions still exist in their new life. Some are deeply troubled and confused. Often, this is due to the mistaken belief that Christianity somehow guarantees us immunity from pressures and problems, trials and tribulations.

Some have been subtly misled by the false notion that our “abundant life” in Christ means freedom from troubles. Consequently, many are shaken in the faith when afflictions begin to arise. (see Mark 4:17).

The problem with affliction is one which God’s people have struggled with for centuries. The first step to understanding this difficult subject is to see what the scriptures say.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

PETER cautioned us not to view the sudden appearance of trials as an unusual event in the believer's life: "*Beloved, **DO NOT THINK IT STRANGE concerning the FIERY TRIAL** which is to try you, as though some STRANGE THING happened to you*" (I Pet. 4:12).

PAUL reminded us that, "we **MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS enter the kingdom of God**" (Acts 14:22). He also told us "**That we would SUFFER TRIBULATION**", and even went so far as to remind us that God had appointed us to go through them! (I Thess. 3:3-4).

JESUS even warned the church of coming tribulations: "*IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!*" (John 16:33).

WHO SUFFERS FROM AFFLICTION?

Everyone! Both the believer and the unbeliever experience the pressures of affliction.

Sometimes it is much easier to understand why the ungodly suffers from affliction, especially when we consider his sin and rebellion against God: “**Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.**” (Psalms 107:17, KJV).

However, it is not so easy to understand why the godly suffers from affliction, especially when he loves God and serves Him willingly. But the Bible is filled with examples of the righteous suffering affliction, and even declares that, “**MANY are the AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS**” (Psalms 34:19). There is some comfort in knowing that even godly people suffer affliction.

WHAT ARE SOME GODLY EXAMPLES?

- **JOB** said, “see thou **MINE AFFLICTION**” (Job 10:15, KJV)
- **MOSES** chose “to **SUFFER AFFLICTION** with the people of God” (Heb. 11:25).
- **DAVID** said, “**I am AFFLICTED** very much” (Psalms 119:107).
- **THE PROPHETS** – “Take, my brethren, the prophets... **FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING AFFLICTION**” (James 5:10, KJV).
- **JESUS** “... was oppressed and He was **AFFLICTED**” (Isaiah 53:7).
- **PAUL** “... **out of MUCH AFFLICTION** and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears” (II Cor. 2:4).

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW AFFLICTION?

It's not enough to know that godly people suffer affliction. Many want to know why - even Moses cried, "*WHY have You afflicted Your servant?*" (Numbers 11:11).

— AFFLICTIONS ARE FOR OUR OWN GOOD —

David stated that God "IN FAITHFULNESS HAST AFFLICTED ME" (Psalms 119:75, KJV).

Q. Why would David thank God for faithfully afflicting him?

A. Because he had discovered that there was a divine purpose in them, and that purpose was good. Before we can successfully deal with our own afflictions, **we must recognize that they have a divine purpose in our lives**, and that God is working that purpose for our good.

ARE AFFLICTIONS WORKING FOR OUR GOOD?

Yes! The scriptures are very clear on this point.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17). This verse reveals that **our afflictions are working for us a “FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY!”** They are working for us, not against us.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Again, this scripture reveals that **all things are working for us** - not just the good things, or some things, or most things, but **all things. THIS INCLUDES ALL OF OUR AFFLICTIONS.**

WHAT GOOD DOES AFFLICTION ACCOMPLISH?

It produces Christ-like character in our lives. God wants to mold us into His image. One of the most effective ways of accomplishing this is through the pressures of affliction.

Just as **a diamond is formed through intense pressure**, Christ's character is formed in our lives through the pressures of adversity.

Just as **gold is purified through intense heat**, our character is refined and perfected through the flames of adversity: "*Behold, I have refined you I have tested you in the furnace of affliction*" (Isaiah 48:10).

Christ's character is often forged in the blast furnace of affliction.

As we have seen, our light afflictions work for us **“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”** (II Cor. 4:17).

Our afflictions are like employees who work for us. They are diligently working on our behalf to produce the eternal qualities of Christlikeness in our lives. God often produces the *“fruit of the Spirit”* in us through the afflictions we experience.

- When God wants to produce **peace**, He doesn't bring peaceful situations but trials and stress.
- When God wants to produce **love**, He often brings disagreeable, insensitive people into our lives.
- When God wants to produce **longsuffering** - you've got it. He allows us to suffer long.

AFFLICTIONS BUILD OUR FAITH

Our natural tendency is to think that afflictions weaken us and undermine our faith. But just the opposite is true. The trials and tribulations of life actually build up our faith.

Just as an athlete exercises diligently to build up his muscles, the pressures which come into our lives work to increase our faith. They work to strengthen our trust and confidence in God.

Paul praised the Thessalonians because their faith increased greatly in the midst of their afflictions and persecutions. (II Thess. 1:3, 4).

AFFLICTIONS BUILD SPIRITUAL ENDURANCE

“ . . . *but we glory in tribulations also: **KNOWING THAT TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE***” (Rom. 5:3, KJV)

The word “**patience**” simply means endurance.

Again, our natural tendency is to view tribulations as obstacles which hinder our spiritual progress and weary us.

But just the opposite is true. They produce endurance and fortitude. They build determination in us to keep pressing forward in God. Just as James reminds us: “**Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience**” (James 1:3).

AFFLICTIONS HELP US COMFORT OTHERS

*“Blessed be the God who comforts us in all our tribulation, that **WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY TROUBLE . . .**”* (II Cor. 1:3, 4)

Afflictions equip us to comfort others. The school of affliction trains us in the fine art of ministering the comfort of God. Often, those who have suffered adversity are better prepared to relate to others who are experiencing afflictions.

One of the great benefits of afflictions is that they help us to be sensitive to the hurts and pains of others. **The afflictions that we have experienced help us to feel the problems of others as our own,** and minister to them the tenderness, understanding, and love of God which they need.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO OUR AFFLICTIONS?

Many think that the only victory in affliction is in escaping from them or when they finally end. The Christian challenge is to find our victory **IN** our affliction and not **AFTER** our affliction. **God is glorified when we find victory in the midst of affliction.**

The foundation for victory is built upon a proper attitude toward afflictions. We must recognize that they have a divine purpose. We must see them as God does. We must correct our perspective, and line it up with what the Word of God declares. We must place our faith in the reality that “**ALL things work together for good . . .**” (Rom. 8:28). This is the first step to victory.

Often, we must examine our attitude and **clear our hearts of any bitterness or anger towards the afflictions we experience.**

1. WE SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD

"IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS . . ." (I Thess. 5:18).

When we see that afflictions aren't a curse but a blessing, we have good reason to rejoice in the Lord.

We can react negatively to our afflictions, or we can react positively. **We can resent them as unwelcomed intruders, or we can receive them as faithful friends.**

To those who respond with a negative spirit, "*all the days of the afflicted are evil*" (Prov. 15:15). Those who recognize a beneficial purpose in their afflictions can have the same confession as James who said: **"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds."** (James 1:2, NIV).

2. WE SHOULD PRAY

"Is any among you afflicted? LET HIM PRAY" (James 5:13, KJV)

Afflictions should bring us closer to the Lord in communion and prayer. When adversities, trials, and pressures come into our lives, we should turn to the Lord in prayer. Rather than trouble our lives needlessly by communing with our fears, natural understanding, and insecurities, we should look to Jesus.

Prayer is often the key to comfort, peace, confidence and understanding in Christ. Often, we do not understand why an affliction has come into our life. But prayer unlocks the door to understanding and insight. Prayer focuses us upon the power of God, instead of our problems.

3. WE SHOULD LOOK TO GOD'S WORD

*"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep **Your word**"*
(Psalms 119:67)

Afflictions should direct us to the counsel of God's Word for answers.

As we have already seen in this booklet, the Bible has a great deal to say about affliction. The Bible has all the answers for every problem in life. God wants us to go to His Word because it is a source of comfort, encouragement, and understanding.

- *"This is my comfort in my affliction, for **Your word** has given me life" (Psalms 119:50).*
- *"Unless **Your law** had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction" (Psalms 119:92).*

4. WE SHOULD EXERCISE FAITH AND PATIENCE

“Rejoicing in hope, PATIENT IN TRIBULATION, continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

Patience is an important ingredient in achieving victory. Without it we soon become impatient and frustrated in our afflictions.

Our natural tendency is to react impatiently and squirm out of our afflictions as soon as possible. When we do this, we fail to give God the time He needs to accomplish what He desires in our life.

If we look to Jesus and wait patiently upon Him, we give God room to perfect the good work He wants in us, that we may become all that He intends us to be.

“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:4).

WHAT ARE GOD'S PROMISES TO THE AFFLICTED?

- **DELIVERANCE:** "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all (Psalms 34:19).
- **MERCY:** "...the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted" (Isaiah 49:13).
- **HEARS OUR PRAYER:** "for He hears the cry of the afflicted." (Job 34:28).
- **GOD FEELS OUR AFFLICTIONS:** "In all their affliction He was afflicted..." (Isaiah 63:9).
- **GOD DOESN'T DESPISE THE AFFLICTED:** "For He has not despised the affliction of the afflicted" (Psalms 22:24).

[Additional Scriptures: Romans 8:35; Hebrews 13:5; Jeremiah 16:19; Psalms 18:27).

CONCLUSION

The Christian life is not just a life of fun and relaxation. God has a destiny for His people, and a divine purpose to fulfill. He wants to conform us into *“the image of His Son”* (Rom. 8:29). One of the ways He accomplishes this is through afflictions. The Bible clearly states that *“all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* (Rom. 8:28). They do so in order to conform us into His image. **It doesn't say that all things are good, but that all things are working for good.** This is a liberating revelation. When we embrace this truth, we begin to see that **our afflictions are not a curse, but a blessing designed by God to truly benefit our lives.** When we receive this revelation, we can **join with the Apostle Paul in declaring, “WE ALSO GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS”** (Romans 5:3).

For a brief overview of the main points in this booklet, please re-read the boldly printed word on each page.



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