

Season 5, Episode 4: Comfort in Affliction (49-80)

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Felicity: Hello and welcome to Two Sisters and cup of Tea. My name is Felicity and I'm here in the States and this is my sister Sarah and she's in the UK.

Sarah: Hi, everyone.

Felicity: And we are excited to be in our fourth episode in our season in Psalm 119. We're going to be jumping back into the text with verses 49 through to 80. It's a big one. We're going to be talking about suffering, we're going to be helping while the Psalmist is going to be helping us to consider what that looks like in the normal Christian life. But before we dig into that, Sarah has been telling me that she has I mean, it sounds like tea drinking travesty that's been going on over there.

Sarah: Well, I mean, is it a travesty? I'm not sure about that, but for an afternoon tea earlier this week with some ladies in church, and then we arrived and the teapots were already on the table with the hot water in, but no, the tea bags weren't in, so we quickly dumped the tea bags into the tea parts. This isn't a good start because you need the boiling water onto the tea bag in order to make the tea.

Felicity: So it was slightly tepid, I imagine. I mean, the water must have been tepid before you even got there. Was I slightly panicked, did you think about asking for just I think two.

Sarah: Of us thought, oh, gosh, I really need to get that pee bag in straightaway, and the other two weren't so bothered, so I don't know.

Felicity: Yeah, that would be disappointing, I feel. But if you went for afternoon tea.

Sarah: It was generally a joy. There wasn't no, because there wasn't biscuits. Because it was like scones and summer. Dudes, it was lovely. Lovely afternoon. But, yeah, they should work on the team next time. Anyway. Well, yeah, we're going to chat through another listener questions. Remember, we had some listener questions come in for this series and we're so thankful for everyone who's sent in their questions. And our question today that we're going to briefly touch on is how do we develop the same delight in God's law to see it as our guide in life and the thing we cling to in times of hardship?

Felicity: Listing. Great question. What do I think just knocked that ball over the net to me? I think it's a really great question. I think what the question is echoing is just the fact that the psalmist has this obvious delight in God's Word. And as we read the psalm, we want to then kind of be running with Him in that, don't we? But how do we actually do that? And I think at the heart of it is this question of the developing the same delight in God's law and as we see it to be God's law, actually, rather than thinking that's God's kind of rules and regulations, that is actually God showing us Himself through His Word. And so as we are in His Word more and as we're seeking to run with Him in that, then we're going to be our hearts are going to be enlarged and broadened in our understanding and so we're going to be delighting in the Lord all the more. Is that a good starting point? Maybe, yeah.

Sarah: No, I think that's really helpful. I think also what we see in this psalm is that he's learning that through affliction, isn't he? He's learning what it looks like to delight in God's law as other comforts are stripped away. He's seeing what it is to trust the Lord and therefore his delight grows as he does that. And I think just that process, often we can think that we just need to get through this suffering, whatever it is. We just need to kind of like get through it and then we'll be back to kind of delighting in God. And actually that's not actually how often it works, is it? Actually, when we're having really hard times, often that's the time when we're closest to the Lord and that's where we do find more delight. And so

it's trusting that he'll work through His Word in the midst of those times and we're going to come onto that today. So it's kind of tying in with today's standards, isn't it? Should we just crack on with the next four? So should I read two and then you read two?

Felicity: Let's do it.

Sarah: Okay, so I'm reading from verse 49. Remember your word to your servants. So you have given me hope, my comfort in my suffering is this your promise preserves my life. The arrogant mock me immersively, but I do not turn from Your law. I remember, Lord, Your ancient laws, and I find comfort in them. Indignation grips me because of the wicked who have forsaken Your law. Your decrees are the theme of my song. Wherever I lodge in the night lord, I remember your name that I may keep your law this has been my practice. I obey your precepts. You are my portion. Lord, I have promised to obey Your words. I have sought out Your face with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to Your promise. I have considered my ways and I've turned my steps to Your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey Your commands. Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law at midnight I rise to give you thanks for Your righteous laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow Your precepts. The earth is filled with Your love. Lord, teach me your decrees.

Felicity: Do good to Your servant according to Your word. Lord, teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust Your commands. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey Your word. You are good and what you do is good. Teach me your decrees. Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep Your precepts with all my heart. Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in Your law. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn Your decrees. The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. Your hands made me, informed me, give me understanding to learn Your commands. May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in Your word. I know, Lord, that Your laws are righteous and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May Your unfailing love be my comfort according to Your promise to Your servant. Let Your compassion come to me, that I may live, for Your law is my delight. May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause, but I will meditate on Your precepts. May those who fear you turn to me those who understand Your statutes. May I wholeheartedly follow Your decrees that I may not be put to shame.

Sarah: Well, there's a lot going on here, isn't there? And I think the last time we were thinking about the different pressures that he was facing and just worth recapping on what those were. There was persecution, wasn't there? There was also unnamed suffering and grief of some kind. And there's also the pressure on his own heart condition to sin. It's going to suffer this double affliction both without and within. And then his question at the start of this next chunk seems to be in verse 50, my comfort in my suffering is this. It's like, what is his comfort in the midst of those pressures? Where does he rent? What's his comfort? I think that's just a really helpful question for us to ask, isn't it? As we even begin to think through these verses, actually, what is our kind of goto comfort? The phrase comfort blanket is there for a reason, isn't it? Comfort food, whatever it is. I think that struck me just even thinking through this.

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's a really helpful starting point for it, isn't it? Just the fact that he says, My comfort in my suffering, that is the state of state affairs, and that's not a kind of unique thing to him, isn't it? The category of suffering is broad, actually. That's not necessarily intense persecution. That can be just in the very everyday ordinariness of all of our lives. So what is our comfort when life feels hard or gets hard? I think that's a really good hard question to be asking, isn't it? Yeah, I was thinking about it this morning and thinking probably I'm likely to run to my friends or to my sister before I run to the Lord. Like that kind of I'm a people person, so that's kind of somewhere where my heart goes, I think.

Sarah: Yeah, so then it's just really striking to see the comfort word is used different way, in different ways in these stanzas. And where does he go? In the first one he goes to God's character and in the second stanza he says the Lord is his portion. So the Lord's kind of sufficiency. The third one, he kind of builds on that. And the comfort is in actually God's goodness that God is good. And then the fourth one, that seems to be the fruit as he finds comfort in God, the fruit is others look to Him and keep going themselves. And that's also a

comfort as well. So there's lots of different ways doesn't know that he does find comfort. So we just kind of draw out something from each.

Felicity: Yes, absolutely. So I really appreciate it. In the first one, I love his remember, remember, remember this kind of in the midst of suffering, call to mind like God's word, his promise, his name, which I think is his character, really. And the word which then is the thing, these ancient laws, they are the thing which kind of almost shows who God is. As we hear Him speak, we are able to understand who he is and what he's like. And even just as a starting point in our suffering, just training myself to remember God. In shorthand. That's what it is, isn't it?

Sarah: Yeah, it's so helpful that, isn't it? It's repeated a number of times, remember, remember. And that's just that discipline of actually just looking up first, let's just remember his character and I love that his word and his promise and his laws all flow out of who he is, his name, doesn't it? They're not separate entities in this. Like it's all part of the same package, isn't it? Who God is. I think that's really, really helpful.

Felicity: I was going to say that your promise when he says your promise preserves my life. And that kind of the allness of life being given by God's promise. Which then takes us into the next stanza, really well, I think with this idea of God the Lord being his portion and the idea that he was in verse 58, I've sort your face with all my heart. Like he's all in with God because God is the one who has given Him life. His promise is literally what his life stands on.

Sarah: Yes, but I think it is really striking, isn't it? So he says at the end of this stance of the earth is filled with your love, Lord, and just think it's very easy to say that when life is going well, isn't it? But to hear that on the lips of someone who's really going through a tough time, it means so much more because it means that they're really seeing God for who he is and not just for what he gives. And I think that's what struck me in this standard, that God being his portion, it isn't just the God of good gifts that he gives in this world, it's God Himself. God Himself is sufficient, and his love is sufficient in this, whether he has comfort in this world or not. And I think that's already struck me in this dancer.

Felicity: Yeah, okay. Yes. All right. So we have this ability through remembering who God is, through hearing the promises again, through dwelling on the Word, through considering God's love even when it doesn't feel like he is loving. At this point, to then this really is quite a challenging idea, isn't it? To be able to say that God is good and you are good in verse 68 and what you do is good. And actually, down in verse 71, it was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. I mean, that is, we just stop and think about that. It's like that turns your world upside down to think that in suffering which has been given by God, that God is still good.

Sarah: Yeah. So he got to the point he's on this journey, isn't he, discovering and kind of remembering who God is. And he's got to the point where he's able to say, it was good for me to be afflicted so that I might obey, so that I might grow so that I might learn your ways more and more. And that's just hugely striking, isn't it? It's not kind of God is good because he's with me in this suffering, which he is, but it's God is good. And his gift, this suffering is actually his gift of goodness to me so that I might grow in learning his ways more and more.

Felicity: And I think underneath that is this absolute conviction that God's ways are just sheer goodness. Like there is just so everything rides on just running God's away. That's the best thing that we can be doing. And so when he says that, so that I might learn a decrees like what he's wanting in the midst of his suffering, he's wanting to keep running in God's way. And I think that's so challenging to me because I think, as you said at the start, suffering can often just stop me short and I'm just waiting for it to be over before I then get back in the game, really. And I think he's very much challenging that.

Sarah: And I think also what struck me about his posture here is there's a humility, isn't there? Like he's saying in verse six, he says teach me knowledge and good judgment. So the good judgment comes from the Lord. The Lord teach me. I don't understand how this is good, but you have the good judgment. So show me, help me to understand. Teach me your decrees that I would know your ways and know your goodness and be able to trust you. And I think that and he gets to the point in the next Panzer where he says my comfort is your unfailing love. Let it be my comfort. His love is unfailing, however much our circumstances might beg to differ. No, what do we know about the Lord in his word? What

do we know about his promise ultimately? What do we see of Jesus fulfilling each and every one of these stanza? Jesus the one who does bring that unfailing love at that cross, that is what he lands on, regardless of what it looks like on the ground, his heart lands there, doesn't it? And wow.

Felicity: And how helpful to have a wow to Jesus at that point as well, because as we then look at Jesus and see, oh, no, that is right. As I see who Jesus is, I see his character. I see God in Him as I see that he is totally worthy to be my whole portion because my life is literally in his hands. And then his goodness is just so evident. And then we have here, I love these verses that may your unfailing love be my company and then let your compassion come to me that I may live. So it's not just right here's, the affliction. You go deal with it, try and run my way in it. But actually, God, Jesus Himself meets us with compassion and love in the midst of that that melts my heart. I love that.

Sarah: Yeah, what's that? Being Hebrews, where it says he sympathizes with every weakness. And that word sympathize is like coming alongside, drawing alongside, suffering with. And there is that sense of nowhere in Jesus, like, fulfilling this that he does. And I love that one of the comforts in the last ones is actually that people look to Him and see this farmers keeping going and they rejoice. And then it says at the end, may those who fear you turn to me. And I love that ultimately, we can turn to Jesus. I love that he's the one who can say that. And we can turn to Jesus as the one who keeps us safe in his everlasting arms. That is the ultimate comfort. He bought us ultimate comfort, eternal comfort through the cross of me. And so we can trust Him, and so we can pray, Lord, would you help me for you to be my comfort?

Felicity: Yes. No, I think that's right. And as we then pray and by God's grace seek to be more like the psalmist and therefore more like Jesus in how that works, then the outworking of that is not just that our own hearts are comforted in that. But we might then also be a comfort to others as we almost show people Jesus in that way. That's kind of deep. But no, but it's so true, isn't it?

Sarah: Because isn't it true, like, when you see someone going through a really hard time, you see them going, well, as a Christian, you see them keeping going, standing firm. That is so encouraging, isn't it? That's why we read biographies. That's why we like, go, wow. People who've gone through the mill and yet are still going and still speaking of the Lord's goodness. And you're just like, we need that, don't we? And that is a comfort in its own right, as well as being the fruit of putting his hope in God's word. And I just love that I need my kind of perspective to be shifted to see things in this way. That's what I've taken away from the last week, dwelling on these verses, like, I need my eyes to be sharpened to see like this, and I need to pray. Yes, the Lord would do that work in my heart to help me.

Felicity: And I think that's seeing it now, when the suffering is not as intense as it is for this guy, so that when it then comes, I know where to turn. Exactly. We're already kind of bolstered. Exactly.

Sarah: Yeah.

Felicity: Do you want to pray for us, Sarah, towards that end?

Sarah: Yeah, let's pray. Father, we thank you for this prayer. We thank you for this song of the heart. We thank you that this psalmist is showing us what it is to find comfort in you, in Your character, in Your sufficiency, in Your goodness. Lord, we praise you that we can we praise you that we can run to you and we do pray. Would you help us? Would you help us to run to You, Lord, whether we're feeling it or not? Would you help us to cling onto these words and therefore delight in Your Word all the more as we see the shore foundation that it is in the midst of the storms of life? Lord, we do just pray for our hearts in this. Please be at work. We pray in Jesus precious name, who fulfills all of these words. We thank you, Lord. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. As ever, purely a conversation starter. I feel like we're just touching the tip of the iceberg.

Sarah: I know. It's such a big thing, isn't it? We'd really recommend just opening this with a friend, just starting these conversations with a friend. Why are you challenged by go and call a friend, go and have a coffee with a friend and just sit down and talk about it. We love to talk about these things. We try and get the conversation going on social media as well.

We're not always present on there, but when we are, we'd love you to engage with us. Do follow us, if you don't already. And we look forward to seeing you next time for episode five.

Felicity: Absolutely. See you then.

Sarah: Bye. Thanks for listening to this episode. It's sponsored by ten of those.com. Check them out for great discounted resources that point to Jesus.