**The Lord has dealt well with me**

Text: Psalm 119:65-72

Rev. David Waldron

Scriptures: James 1:1-10; Psalm 119:65-72

Songs Chosen: [SttL] 100, 316, 119:65-72, 497, 523

**Series:** Psalm 119.Sermon 3 of 3 (Teth)

**Theme:** The Goodness of God

**Proposition:** Christian, God has dealt well with you!

**Introduction**

Have you ever been so low as to wonder if God really is good? Eight years after it was written, a novel by American author Winston Groom was adapted into a movie of the same name. This was also the name of the main character, who famously spoke these words: "*Momma always said -* *Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get*." A quotable line from Forrest Gump.

Brothers and Sisters/friend, have you ever thought you’ve received less goodness from the Lord and more trouble and difficulty than others?

* that you got the chocolates with the hard centres, or
* the gooey toffee that sticks to your teeth or
* the box was left out in the sun, so the chocolate melted and dripped out to mix with the dust and dirt on the ground?

More than your ‘fair share’ of suffering, sorrow, sadness, disappointment, depression, death, trial, trouble, tribulation? Do you ever struggle to see the goodness of your God in your own life?

The psalmist in our text didn’t, as we see in this 9th section of Psalm 119. The 9th letter of the Hebrew alphabet is ‘Teth’. The word “good” begins with this letter and occurs six times in this section of the psalm. Look at verses 65 “*You have dealt well(good) with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.”* “You have been good to me. **just as** you promised”. This divine commitment is reflected in God’s covenant promises to Abraham “I will bless you”.

The purpose of this sermon is to be reminded/to see, that the Lord is Good and does only Good to all his servants, to all his beloved children, to all those in Christ. There are three points this afternoon:

1. The Goodness of God Himself
2. The Goodness of God in Affliction
3. The Goodness of God in Spiritual Wealth
4. **The Goodness of God Himself**

One of the endearing/attractive qualities of Forest Gump is his morality – often in stark contrast to the immorality of those around him. A definition of goodness is moral excellence. The psalmist writes in verse 68a *“You are good and do good”.* God is good in Himself. He is perfectly moral. He is not defined by our description of goodness. God Himself defines what good, moral excellence, is. *“For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).*

God is morally perfect.

* He cannot lie (Heb 6:18).
* He does no wickedness, no wrong (Job 34:10).
* He cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself tempts no one (James 1:13).
* God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

The perfect goodness of God is clearly seen, being understood from what has been made and also from what He sustains:

* He made all things very good (Gen 1:31).
* ***“****The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works”* (Psalm 145:9).
* The Lord preserves man and beast (Psalm 36:6; Ps 104:21; Matt 6:26).
* *“He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (Mat 5:45).

God is morally perfect and gloriously generous. God gives from his own abundant goodness. He gives good gifts both in their intention and effect. As a perfect Father, God knows how to give good gifts to His children (Matt 7:11). When the Lord Jesus Christ walked this earth, He was perfectly good. He always did good. He gave gifts of His wisdom, teaching, healing, and compassion. Here are two examples:

* After casting a demon out of a gentile woman’s daughter, we read that Jesus “*told them to give her something to eat*” (Mark 5:43).
* Then in the gentile region of Decapolis giving hearing to a deaf man, and clear speech where he had spoken with difficulty. **Mark 7:37** *And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." (Mark 7:37).*

Brothers and Sisters, this good Jesus has been given to us. He is the greatest good gift of God. *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:11).* Brothers and Sisters, you have already received abundant good from God. You can say confidently with the psalmist (v65) *“You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word” ;(* v68a) *“You are good and do good”.*

If you have not yet come to trust in Christ as Lord and Saviour, then seek the Lord, whilst you yet have breath to find Him **“***The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him” (Lamentations 3:25).*

In his poem-drama, “Pippa Passes”, 19th century English poet Robert Browning wrote the much-quoted line “*God’s in heaven and all’s right with the world*” This is partly true. God is in heaven, but all is not right with the world. Which leads us to the 2nd point...

1. **God’s Goodness in Affliction**

We experience affliction in this life because we are part of a world that is no longer right, no longer very good. It is a broken place and we are part of that brokenness. Affliction is “the state of being in grievous pain”. The root Hebrew word translated ‘affliction’ literally means “bowed down, humbled”.

Edith Schaeffer, wife of Francis, co-founder of L’Abri, in her book simply titled “Affliction” wrote: *“Affliction must be recognized as something we all need to deal with. There is no place to go for a vacation from the abnormality of the universe, from the effects of the Fall upon every area of life, and from the conflict of the ages. Persecution and affliction are a normal part of the Christian life”.*

God’s people have always known affliction. See the words of the psalmist in v67:*“Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word”.* Affliction is good for the child of God. It is often used by Him to bring back one who has gone astray. As we see in the parable of the prodigal son. The wayward son had squandered his inheritance. He was eating pig food. No one was giving him anything. He was afflicted by consequence of his own rebellion. How many parents have prayed that the Lord would so afflict their beloved, wayward children that they might be returned to Him?

It seems like the psalmist had experienced trial and trouble both in the past and at present. Look at verses 69-70: *“The arrogant have forged a lie against me; With all my heart I will observe Your precepts. Their heart is covered with fat, But I delight in Your law”. The words “*forged a lie” literally mean ‘the insolent/arrogant have smeared me with falsehood.

What is the response of this child of God to affliction? Bitterness? Anger? Resentment? Despair? Numb resignation? No. Spiritual vision sees God’s goodness in the midst of affliction: v71 “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes”. As we have seen, affliction may bring a person back to Him when astray. Affliction is a teacher– a part of God’s good discipline of His children.

God disciplines us as a good father disciplines his children So that we may share in his holiness (Heb 12:10). *“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).*

Luther once said “*I never knew the meaning of God’s Word until I came into affliction. I have always found it one of my best schoolmasters*”.

God’s gracious rod of affliction expounds the Word to the believer’s softened heart, the yielding soul. In affliction faith is exercised/tested and strengthened; resulting in praise and glory and honour to God who is good (1 Pet 16:7). This truth is reflected in the words of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, author of the book “Tortured for Christ”: "*When an engineer has built a bridge, the fact that a cat can pass over the bridge is no proof that the bridge is good. A train must pass over it to prove its strength*."

Anything that drives a person closer to God is for his/her good. The Christian should regard every circumstance of life, no matter how painful, as a good gift from God (Rom 8:28). *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2).* However, the un-spirit-enlightened man can only say “it is evil, not good for me that I have been afflicted”.

Jacob lost sight of the goodness of His covenant God when Simeon was held hostage in Egypt and he believed Joseph to be dead. He said Gen 42:36 “*All these things are against me*” (Gen 42:36). But later, the Scripture says, his spirit revived. *“It is enough, my son Joseph is still alive”* (Gen 45:28).

Joseph himself had a firmer grasp of the goodness of God saying to his brothers who had done him wrong: *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Gen 50:20).*

Christ perfectly lived out the goodness of God through affliction. *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).* “*Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried*” (Isa 53:4). His is the greater affliction. Our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in everything, full of grace and truth, who has done all things well suffered the greatest affliction. If our Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, could learn obedience from the things which He suffered., How much more can you and I learn from the afflictions of life?

Today we may rejoice in the goodness of God that we are partakers/sharers of His sufferings (1 Pet 4:13). All the ‘chocolates’ in the box of life which God has blessed you with are good, although the ‘taste’ of some may be very bitter, the ‘hardness’ difficult to endure, the ‘texture’ challenging to cope with. In the end it will all do you good and make you richer, which brings us to our third point.

1. **God’s Goodness in Spiritual Wealth**

It is predicted with current trends that 1% of the world’s population will own 2/3 of the world’s wealth in 12 years time. There are increasing numbers of super-rich people, but many more who experience great poverty.

The psalmist writes in verse 72 *“The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces”.* Athousand is the largest number in Hebrew. Here it is in the plural! ‘Thousands’. The commands of God are good because they express the moral perfection of His character. *“So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12).* They are good because they produce spiritual wealth in us.

The psalmist knows the value of the voice of God, so He petitions the Lord **–** verse 66 **“***Teach me good discernment and knowledge***”;** verse 68 “*Teach me Your statutes*”. I want your wealth! Not to run off like a rebellious selfish son, but to live in your presence in the wealth of your Word!

Margaret Nikol came to the USA as a refugee from Bulgaria with her concert violin and one page from the Bible. Communists had ransacked homes and churches, confiscating hymnals and Scriptures. One woman in Margaret’s church had sat on her Bible when the police burst into her home. After they left, she tore out one page after another to share with the other believers, rather than risking the whole book being lost. Margaret was 12 at the time and got parts of Gen 16-17; the promise of God to Abram and Sarah of a son. When she came to America, she marvelled at the ready supply of Bibles at a local Christian bookstore. For 25 years she had prayed “Lord I so want to have your word”. Now she had her own Bible; a gift from the Lord. Not just one page to read and re-read.

Incredible that some do not bring their own Bible to church (in churches not blessed with pewBibles as we are). Incredible that some do not read and study their Bible for themselves at home. Do many then not understanding the true worth of this treasure?

Would you part with one leaf of your Bible for hundreds of dollars if you could never replace it? You cannot exhaust the veins of treasure in the store of Scripture.

Imagine a ship at sea where the sailors take soundings, as they did when Paul was taken as a captive to Rome when the vessel was being blown in a storm towards the shore. The rope is paid out over the gunwale of the ship, knots are carefully spaced at regular intervals to provide a measurement, there’s a weight on the end to pull the rope down through the water. The line goes out. If the rope were long enough it could reach down even to base of the Mariana ocean trench, some 11,000m below! But what if the weight never reached the ocean bottom? What if the water was so deep that no length of line would ever be sufficient?

Paul writes to the Ephesians about the ‘*unsearchable/unfathomable riches of Christ*’ (Eph 3:8). The wealth of Christ is untraceable, we cannot plumb its depths. It is a reservoir so deep that soundings cannot reach the bottom of it. There is no human measure large enough to fully gauge who Christ is and to encompass the extent of His saving work.

*How about you?* Whatever your own situation in life today, whether blessed with bountiful good health, family, material assets, or whether afflicted with pain, distress, oppression, can you say in Christ “*You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word” (Psalm 119:65)?*

AMEN