

Finishing Well

Lesson #2

A Pilgrim Journey Through the Valley of Baca

January 11, 2023

Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

I Cor. 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

OT events are written that we might receive strength and comfort from them as they serve as illustrations of the dangers and perils that exist on our personal journey of faith.

The Tabernacle, the place of worship, held the Ark of the Covenant and the manifest presence of God, the shekinah glory.

Deut. 16:16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose...

- celebrate 3 different festivals and worship God

Psalm 84 tells of a journey to the Temple in Jerusalem. It expresses a deep longing for the presence of God, to be in His house, in His courts, and to dwell in His presence.

Ps. 84:1-12 How lovely are Your dwelling places, LORD of armies!

² My soul longed and even yearned for the courtyards of the LORD;

My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³ The bird also has found a house, And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may put her young: Your altars, LORD of armies, My King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. *Selah*

⁵ Blessed is the person whose strength is in You, In whose heart are the roads to Zion!

⁶ Passing through the Valley of Baca they make it a spring; [well]

They go from strength to strength, *Every one of them* appears before God in Zion.

⁸ LORD God of armies, hear my prayer; Listen, God of Jacob! *Selah*

⁹ See our shield, God, And look at the face of Your anointed.

¹⁰ For a day in Your courtyards is better than a thousand *elsewhere*. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory;

He withholds no good thing from those who walk with integrity.

¹² LORD of armies, Blessed is the person who trusts in You!

The King James Bible uses the word TEARS 35 times; WEPT is used 68 times.

The Valley of Baca [Balsam tree or weeping] is a name for any difficult and painful place in life where everything seems hopeless. You feel helpless in the "pit of despair."

Valley of Tears is part of the pilgrimage of God's children. Joseph, in his divine pilgrimage of God's providence, went through many valleys. Genesis records he wept 8 times.

Although David lived a life of regal kingship and reigned in majesty, he traversed much heartache and trials. The Bible records that King David wept 7 times.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet who wrote Lamentations, described his wish that his whole head were a river of waters so he could just continually weep for the breach of his people Israel.

Peter went out and wept bitterly after he betrayed the Lord.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane: He is nigh even unto death, sweating as it were great drops of blood, and He is weeping for sin and for what sin will do to Him on the cross!

Even our Savior had to go through the Valley of Tears or Baca.

The Balsam tree which weeps its sap like tears reminded the travelers of the tears they shed while on the journey. Many traveled great distances and endured hardship through the Valley of Baca [Valley of Weeping or Tears] a harsh, very dry, desolate place which would test the patience [endurance] of the pilgrims as they journeyed to meet with God.

- It proved to be very hard and difficult to traverse. The way was sometimes discouraging, so they would sing and worship as they traveled.

Every Christian, at some time in his spiritual journey, will go through the Valley of Tears.

If you haven't been through this valley yet, pack your bags. You will go to a hard, dry, difficult, inhospitable place. You may feel as though you will never get out of this valley.

We can relate to this story in a meaningful way if we view the journey and the pilgrims' experience as a story with a spiritual application that provides a model of our spiritual journey or pilgrimage through this life.

- Our earthly destination: Living in God's Presence God's presence in my life
- Our heavenly destination: The Heavenly City God's ETERNAL presence.

We all have our valleys of Baca that we pass through on our way to the New Jerusalem.

Several truths gleaned from this passage will offer help to us in our spiritual journey.

Advice to the Pilgrim: 7 Keys For A Successful Passage Through Life

1. Delight In The Lord

Ps. 84:1-2 How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Ps. 42:1-4 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Ps. 81:10 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Truth: We must have a heart devoted to the Lord, a spiritual "appetite" that cries out for nourishing fellowship with the Lord. [See II Chron. 16:9]

2. Look To God Alone For Your Strength.

Ps. 84:5a Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee...

Ps. 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth:

but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.

Key: If there is darkness around them, they wait for the Lord to send the light.

➤ This is what encouraged Joseph during 13 years of waiting and suffering in Egypt.

Ps. 27:14 Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart;

wait, I say, on the Lord. [Live for Him; Long for Him; Look to Him; Love Him]

The Apostle Paul endured a particularly rough passage in life.

II Cor. 11:23-28 in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one.

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked;

a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters,

in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often,

in cold and nakedness— ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily:

my deep concern for all the churches. Yet in the last days of his life he was able to say -

II Tim. 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my

departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race; I have kept

the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord,

the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have

loved His appearing.

What was his life's secret?

II Cor. 12:9 My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

His strength was in God! ➤ The only way to beat "burnout."

You do NOT have enough resources in yourself to make the whole journey.

➤ We burn out because we strive in our own strength.

Most Christians will agree that we can't make it in our own strength, yet SO many of us do not take steps to ensure God's strength for themselves.

Truth: The Christian life is impossible without God's strength.

Often our greatest battlefield is learning to trust Him instead of trying in our own steam!

Zech. 4:6 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit'

Ps. 84:5 "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You."

- If I make it through the valley of Baca with its tears, dryness, and famine,
 - ❖ I need God to equip me with "divine stickability."
- I need God's strength to BELIEVE and KNOW that He will not let me go.
- I need His strength to obey Him, even though you seem to see that everything is contrary to what you would want, and what you think God would want for you.
- I need His strength to obey Him even though dark clouds hover above me.
- I need His strength to be my portion so that I emerge victorious as an overcomer.

3. Put Your Heart Into The Journey

Ps. 84:5 "Whose heart is set on pilgrimage."

People whose hearts are set on a journey:

- Make the right preparations Don't get side-tracked.

James 1:2-8 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- A double-minded person has no stability so he cannot face the demands of life.

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

To build my life on my circumstances which are always changing, is to invite constant unrest and disappointment in my life.

A believing heart is a steadfast heart, one that is not easily shaken by bad news or difficult circumstances and is confident that the Lord can handle any problem.

I must by faith build on The Changeless and The Eternal which yields peace and confidence in my life. Keep your eyes on the finish line.

4. Pilgrims Only Pass Through The Valley.

Ps. 84:6 "Who PASSING THROUGH the valley of Baca, tears...."

a. The old country preacher was asked to recite his favorite part of the Bible. He replied, "and it came to pass." Why? He replied, "I know whatever I go through, no matter how bad it is, that it too will come to pass, and I will make it through."

b. We know Satan is the thief who comes to steal our HOPE. He whispers:

- "It will never be better. It will always be like this".

c. Naomi, after the death of her husband and her sons, must have lost hope.

Ruth 1:20 She said unto them, Call me not Naomi [delight, delightful] call me Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

d. Job 6:8-9, 11 Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! That it would please God to crush me; that He would loose His hand, and cut me off! What strength do I have, that I should hope? and what is my end, that I should prolong my life?

e. Satan desires to steal your hope and joy so you will turn bitter, lose hope and stop your journey.

f. Chronic complainers set down roots in the valley of Baca, with no intention of moving. They camp to wallow in their sorrows and are satisfied with their self-pity. Some people get comfortable in the Valley of Baca.

Truth: We must travel through and face a "valley of weeping" characterized by harsh, dry places of barrenness, affliction, and confusion on our spiritual journey.

Truth: We will suffer the hurts, disappointments and the TEARS while we are GOING THROUGH the valley. It is neither our dwelling place nor a place to camp.

Ps. 30:5 "...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

g. We will feel - Desolate, discouraged, depressed
 Unproductive or unfruitful Lonely, deserted, hopeless
 Empty, worried, distressed Puzzled, perplexed, bewildered

What we do next will determine our fate; whether we win or lose;

whether we come out victorious or get knocked down, defeated, and destroyed.

Vital: This valley, trial, test is not my destination. All will soon pass away.

II Cor. 4:16-17 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

- Our troubles, our valleys are only for a moment, when compared with the eternal weight of God's glory.
- You are destined for the joy of being in His presence, ruling in His Kingdom. Keep your eye on the prize.

h. Remember the promises, the providence, the presence, and the power of God.

5. See The Opportunity In Every Trial

Trials are on nearly every page of the Bible because they are common to all people.

Goal: Discover God's blessings in the midst of the worst of conditions.

Dig a well for Refreshment > a place of blessing out of a place of sorrow

Ps. 84:6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also fills the pools. The pilgrims passing through the valley of weeping MAKE IT A WELL.

1. They don't throw up their hands in despair.
2. They don't give up to the circumstances.
3. They don't spend time bemoaning their fate, talking about how hard it is, how destitute they are, how lonely they feel, how deserted. NO . . .

4. *They Dig A Well!*

When the American West opened, many a traveler passed over the rich, black earth that lay on top of the territory of Nebraska because they could see no water; the land was "good for nothing." One writer called it, "The Great America Desert". Some even died while on their journey, for lack of refreshment. Nebraska, the breadbasket of our nation, produces more wheat and corn than almost any other state in the union. What happened? What made the difference that those early travelers couldn't see. They failed to realize that under the land of Nebraska, is an underground lake, an aquifer that lay under 2/3's of the state. Someone decided to dig down and found all the water they needed to turn the "Great American Desert" into the breadbasket of America.

Digging My Well

1. Dig a Well by Prayer

Psalm 84:8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Lord God of Jacob shows us brokenness and loss become richness and fullness, a crooked man through whom God draws straight lines. We see a faithful God who carries us as we find ourselves in those dark, dry, dreadful places that we would not choose to be. No matter their circumstance they kept talking to God, realizing that through prayer they could experience power to help them get through the Valley of Baca.

- God walks with His own when we seek Him.

Jer. 29:13 And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

2. Dig A Well by Experiencing God's Presence

Ps. 84:7, 10 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. ¹⁰For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

As these believers obeyed God, they experienced God's presence which has a transforming effect.

3. Dig A Well By Digging Into God's Promises

Psalm 84:11-12 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

¹²O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

There is the Valley of Baca and the promises of God. You will either give into your feelings and circumstances or you will rest on the promises of God by faith. The promise is God will not withhold anything that is good or beneficial from you as you walk in the center of His will. You will find a well of comfort, of encouragement, healing and victory while traveling through the Valley of Weeping.

4. Dig A Well By Praising God

Ps. 84:4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Praise God for Who He is. Your circumstances, as bad as they are, have not changed Who God is. Praise isn't a feeling; it is a choice you make. As you choose to worship God, He lifts you above the circumstances as you announce through your praise that the problem may be bigger than you, but it is not bigger than God. Praise confesses: God is in control.

5. Dig A Well By Looking For God's Provision

You must dig the well. God often won't do what only He can do until we come to the end of ourselves. Then God can work. "God is not all you need until He is all you have."

6. Dig A Well By Relying On God's Power

Ps. 84:9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

We serve an all-powerful God. God is the Controller and Ruler of all. No one can defeat Him. Our strength comes from Him. As these believers walked through the difficulties obeying God they got stronger. Sometimes it takes a trial to strengthen our faith. The problem that could sink you, when it is turned over to God, can become the platform that blesses you.

7. Dig A Well Deep Into The Grace Of God

Key: God's grace is more than enough when we travel through the Valley of Baca.

If the Lord is your Strength, and if your heart is set on the journey, you can see the Valley of Weeping become a spring. What to others is a place of bitterness can to you become a place of blessing and growth. "Faith dares to dig blessings out of hardships!"

a) Opportunities to prove God

b) Opportunities for growth

c) Opportunities to be a shining testimony to others

The Valley of Weeping has become a spring for me!

G. Campbell-Morgan: "Faith digs wells in the driest places and finds that living water."

Advice to the Pilgrim: 7 Keys For A Successful Passage Through Life

6. Drink From The Well > Gain Victory > Become an Overcomer

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: ¹⁴ But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Example: Unbelief causes me to look at God through the lens of my circumstances which yields hopelessness. FAITH enables me to look at my circumstances, considering the character and attributes of God which yields the fruit of hope.

Lamentations 3:19-39 Jeremiah, a prophet for 40 years, was imprisoned, rejected, lonely, ridiculed and discouraged.

He turned from contemplating his misery to REMEMBERING God's mercy.

Jeremiah was still in the depths of pain and sorrow, but he chose to call to his mind the faithfulness of God which caused hope to rise up within.

Tozer: Hope is the divine alchemy that transmutes the base metal of adversity into gold.

Jeremiah's realization of God's mercy, compassion and faithfulness caused a wellspring of hope to rise up within that changed his contemplation of troubles into a confession of faith.

Lam 3:22-23 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³ They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

In Lam. 3:25-28, Jeremiah realized the best course of action is to wait patiently and silently for the Lord to work and accomplish His will in His time.

a. God is gracious, faithful and good - no matter how I feel or what I see.

b. As I sit and wait, I MUST seek the Lord with all my heart and draw closer to Him.

In Lam. 3:31-39, Jeremiah concludes that the secret of victory in tough times is to submit to the Lord and accept the fact that "the Lord has laid it on you."

Truth: I must bow before the Lord and submit to Him without complaining, KNOWING that in His time, He will see me through.

In his pain, Jeremiah laid hold of wonderful assurances that encourage us:

3:31 The Lord does NOT cast off His people and forget them.

3:32 In the midst of our pain, we KNOW He loves us.

3:33 God doesn't enjoy chastening His own and He feels our pain.

3:34-36 God sees the way people treat us.

3:37-38 God is on the throne and in control of all events

3:39 If He chastens us for our sins, we shouldn't complain, for even His chastening is evidence of His love.

My Confession: *I recognize that God is not against me but is for me.*

I will look for God's comfort in the Holy Spirit.

I will confess "God is my salvation. I will trust You and not be afraid."

WHY? "Because the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."

Key: These are the words of a well-digger, an overcomer, a survivor in the valley of weeping.

7. Remember: *God Is In Control.*

He's ALWAYS in sovereign control. He will never surrender His position on the throne to any person or anything. He cannot be usurped. He cannot be defied. God is in control!

Ps. 84:6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring;

God's promise: If I am

- If I am looking to God alone for my strength,
- If I've put my heart into the journey,
- If I'm looking to see what opportunity God might have in every trial,
- If I have dug a well and drink from it, then the sovereign God will do 2 things for me:

1. He will direct my steps in strength. My strength will increase in the Valley of Baca.

Ps. 84:7 They go from strength TO strength; God will direct their steps in strength

The pilgrim goes in God's abundantly available strength. Our faith is exercised in the valley.

The work of God in a person's life: When you allow the Holy Spirit free reign in your life, you will go from glory to glory. You will grow from strength to strength, until you bear the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Oh, let God do that in your life! Submit to Him.

Truth: Every difficulty overcome means a higher strength to overcome future difficulties.

Ps. 18:1-3 I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust. my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

³ I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

Ps. 118:14 The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.

Isa. 40:31 But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Consider: I don't want to just limp through life - by the grace of God I want to go from strength to strength! "With faith in God I can overcome my difficulties."

The journey, every trial and the unpleasant path, is to make us stronger and stronger.

Have you witnessed it in believers who have fought debilitating disease and never lost sight of the goodness of God in the midst of their pain and agony?

Have you seen God cover the Valley of Baca with pools as He enriched them and enabled them to praise?

2. He will bring me through to my eternal destination.

Ps. 84:7b Each one appears before God in Zion. [the Holy City]

He IS the Author and the Finisher of our faith! Paul, in the last days of his life wrote a powerful declaration: "I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that (Eternal) day".

God is bringing us to Himself. Events we think are stripping us out are actually making us stronger by God's grace and by His work.

➤ May we receive a blessing in the valley and leave a blessing behind.

God has a goal and a purpose for all His people to be before Him in Zion.

Ps. 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.