

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem
#11 - Valley Gate - Part IV
A Pilgrim Journey Through the Valley of Baca

Psalms 84 tells of a group of people on a journey to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Tabernacle, the place of worship, held the Ark of the Covenant and the manifest presence of God. He required all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate different festivals and worship at the Temple. (Deut. 16:16)

Many traveled great distances and endured hardship through the Valley of Weeping (Baca), a harsh, very dry, desolate place which would test the patience 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.

This psalm expresses a deep longing for the presence of God, to be in His house, in His courts, and to dwell in His presence.

We can relate to this story in a meaningful way if we will 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 destination: the Heavenly City - God's ETERNAL presence. The Apostle Paul says these Old Testament stories 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. (I Cor. 10:11)

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

A valley in Psalms 84:6 reflects a poetic play on words describing a person forced to go through a time of weeping who found God turned tears into a well, providing water.

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

The Balsam tree weeps its sap like tears. No doubt, this reminded the travelers of the tears that they themselves shed while on the journey.

We too 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

The Psalmist describes this journey as "happy" because the thought of the destination motivates him. Even through HARSH, difficult, dangerous places; "Blessed is the man..."

7 KEYS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE THROUGH LIFE

1. DELIGHT IN THE LORD - v. 1-2 - How lovely *is* Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!

² 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.
Truth: We must have a heart devoted to the Lord, a spiritual "appetite" that cries out for nourishing fellowship with the Lord.

2. LOOK TO GOD ALONE FOR YOUR STRENGTH.

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

How many have found that the Christian life is impossible without God's strength?

Often our greatest battlefield is learning to trust Him instead of doing it on our own steam!

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

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. A double-minded person has no stability so cannot face the demands of life. Believers with a steadfast, confident heart whose strength is in the Lord have nothing to fear when they receive bad news because they know the Lord is in control. 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.

The Apostle Paul endured a particularly rough passage in life.

2 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 -

2 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. You'll never finish your race without God's 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.

Question: How DO you live in God's strength?

Isa. 40:29-31 He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength. ³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 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.

- Waiting on God (Look to Him, Live for Him, Listen for Him, Long for Him) -
Devotional life - God's Word - Prayer

3. PUT YOUR HEART INTO THE JOURNEY - v. 5 "Whose heart is set on pilgrimage."

People whose hearts are set on a journey:

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

James 1:5-8 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.

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.

Rev. 3:15-16 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Don't live life being dictated by your circumstances. Keep your eyes on the finish line, "For me to LIVE is Christ".

4. Remember: PILGRIMS ONLY PASS THROUGH THE VALLEY.

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

Psalms 23 "Yea though I WALK THROUGH the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

a. The old country preacher was asked to recite his favorite part of the Bible. He replied, "My favorite part: "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's not going to get any better." "It's always going to 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. People who are 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 -

1. Desolate, discouraged, depressed
2. Unproductive or unfruitful
3. Lonely, deserted, hopeless
4. Empty, worried, distressed
5. 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: We must remember those places are not our destination. All will soon pass away.

2 Corinthians 4:17 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. Remember this truth while traveling through the Valley of Baca.

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 - Dig a Well for Refreshment

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

Ps. 84:6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also fills the pools.

Scripture says the pilgrims who are 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!

a. 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 American Desert". Some even died while on their journey, for lack of refreshment.

Nebraska, the bread basket 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 bread basket of America.

Digging Our Well

1. Dig into the promises of God's Word. You will find a well of comfort, a well of victory! Encouragement, Healing, Comfort, while traveling through the Valley of Weeping.
2. Dig into God's presence through prayer. God walks with His own when we seek Him.
Deut. 4:29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.
Jer. 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.
3. Dig deep into the grace of God. When people go through great trouble and affliction, they tend to dig deep and are drawn close to God instead of allowing Satan to defeat them. 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!

- There is no oil without squeezing the olives,
- No fragrance without crushing the flowers.

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