

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem  
#12 - Pilgrim Journey Through the Valley of Baca - Conclusion

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

Ps. 84:6a *As they pass through the Valley of Baca,*  
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."

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...

7 KEYS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE THROUGH LIFE: Ps. 84:1-7

1. *DELIGHT IN THE LORD*
2. *LOOK TO GOD ALONE FOR YOUR STRENGTH.*
3. PUT (SET) YOUR HEART ON THE JOURNEY.
4. Remember: *PILGRIMS ONLY PASS THROUGH THE VALLEY*
5. *SEE THE OPPORTUNITY IN EVERY TRIAL - Dig a Well for Refreshment*
  - a. Dig into God's Promises, Presence and His Grace.  
"Faith digs wells in the driest places and finds that living water."

6. *DRINK FROM THE WELL > Gain Victory > Be an Overcomer*

John 4:14 Jesus has promised to every believer "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" The well is within you.

Gospel chorus: "Spring up O well within my soul; spring up O Well and make me whole..."

It is based on the song Israel sang in the wilderness when they dug a well in their "valley of weeping" saying, Num. 21:17 "Spring up O well; sing ye unto it"

From The Message: "Sing the song of the well." It's all about praising while you dig; and digging while you praise. Therein lies the victory in the "Valley of Weeping."

*Ira Stanfill (1946) song says:*

You can have a song in your heart in the night - After every mile, after every trial

Anyone can sing when the sun's shining bright - But you need a song in your heart at night.

Isaiah 12:1-6 sheds more light on gaining victory in the valley of weeping.

"O LORD, I will praise You; God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The LORD, *is* my strength and song; He also has become my salvation."

Therefore -- "with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation"

1. Say "Praise the Lord."

2. Call upon His name.

3. Declare His deeds among the people.

4. Give your testimony, your confession of faith. Let the people hear it.

5. Make mention that the Lord's name is exalted, because YOU are exalting it.

6. Sing unto the LORD for He has done excellent things. The Bible says:

Ps. 66:1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands.

Ps. 81:1 Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

Ps. 95:1-2 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

Ps. 98:4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

Ps. 98:6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

Ps. 100:1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

Isa. 12:6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

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

A. W. 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. God chastens but doesn't consume us; He disciplines, but He doesn't destroy us.

To build my life on my circumstances which are always changing, is to invite constant unrest and disappointment in my life. I must by faith build on the changeless and the eternal which yields peace and confidence in my life.

If God is "my portion," (Ps. 73:26), then I am strengthened by that which cannot be used up or destroyed. He is my eternal source of strength, hope and blessing.

Ps. 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

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:

1. The Lord does NOT cast off His people and forget them. (v. 31)

2. In the midst of our pain, we KNOW He loves us. (v. 32)

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

4. God sees the way people treat us. (v.34-36)

5. God is on the throne and in control of all events (v. 37-38)

6. If He chastens us for our sins, we shouldn't complain, for even His chastening is evidence of His love. (v. 39)

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."

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

## 7. REMEMBER THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL.

He's ALWAYS in sovereign control. He will never surrender His position on the throne to any person or any thing. 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 (1) looking to God alone for my strength, and (2) if I've put my heart into the journey, and (3) I'm looking to see what opportunity God might have in every trial, (4) I have dug a well and drink from it, then the sovereign God will do two things for me:

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

b) He will bring me through to my eternal destination.

a) He will direct their steps in strength - v. 7 "They go from strength TO strength"

The pilgrim goes in God's abundantly available strength. Our faith is exercised in the valley. II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

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.

1. Ps. 18:1-2 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.
2. Ps. 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.
3. Ps. 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
4. Ps. 118:14 The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.
5. 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.
6. II Cor. 12:8-10 And He said to me, "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. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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 outgrow my difficulties."

b) He will bring them through to their destination

v. 7 "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".

We must learn to turn our times of sorrow and distress into wells from which we draw the waters of spiritual maturity and growth, knowledge and understanding. We must not allow the tears to destroy us but turn our face toward God.

Receive a blessing in the valley and leave a blessing behind.

Heb. 11:13-14 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

You have an appointment at The Dung Gate located at the southeast corner of the wall. There is quite a distance to this gate from the Valley Gate indicating that, unfortunately, the valley experience can carry on for some time. The Dung Gate led out to the convergence of the Valley of Hinnom (all the garbage, rubbish and dung (filth) of the city was deposited and burned; children offered alive to Molech), and the Kidron Valley (idols were ground to powder and burned in the OT; burial place of the more distinguished persons).

The earliest recorded sanitary laws concerning disposal of human waste is attributed to Moses in the Old Testament. Around 1500 B.C, he instructed the people to dispose of their waste away from the camp, and to use a spade to turn the remains under the earth or sand. Think 2 million people and no toilets and no sewer system.

Consider how life was different 2500 years ago. In ancient Rome, if you threw excrement out of your house and it landed on someone, you had to pay a fine, but only during daylight hours. At night it wasn't considered a crime if you hit someone due to no lighting. Their sewer systems were primitive and had to employ people to clean out blockages and carry human waste out of the city. Very few homes would have been near the sewer system; there were no toilets; a few had access to an open hole that led to the sewer.

Imagine a city of a couple hundred thousand with no sanitary system? Jerusalem in Jesus' day. People collected their waste, carried it via the Dung Gate, and threw it outside the city in a designated place, the Valley of Hinnom. Corpses of the indigent, foreigner, leper, and beggar would have been thrown outside the city in this Valley. On high holy days upwards of 15,000 sheep would be slaughtered. The city would have 125,000 extra people. The amount of waste generated was astronomical.

Imagine the view outside the Dung Gate: a perpetual fire burning with rotting bodies riddled with worms and flies.

Valley experiences are used by the Lord to clear away the rubbish so that true faith, refined by the fire, can come forth and produce fruit. Use of the Dung Gate will purify us and prepare us to be empowered for service.

If this gate is broken down so none of the rubbish can be cleansed away, it needs to be repaired. If you are not using the dung gate in your life, all the accumulated refuse in your life will cause you to smell in the sight of God and man. If we do not use the Dung Gate to constantly throw out all that grieves the Holy Spirit, the atmosphere of our hearts and lives will soon become smelly and putrid.

Call of the Dung Gate: Enter here for the death of your flesh. It is time for the garbage in your soul to be removed. God is searching for clean, empty vessels that He can use in His service. Are you willing for absolute surrender?