

Psalm 84 – Valley of Baca

Psalm 84:5-7

PW Emerson – 07/21/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

We're doing a series on Psalms this summer

- First week we looked at Psalms 1 – about the blessings God has for us
- Second week we look at Psalm 119:105 – how God's Word is to guide us
- Last week we look at Psalm 122 – about worshipping with excitement!

Today we're looking at Psalm 84 – the Valley of Baca

Psalm 84:5-7

⁵Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

⁷They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STRENGTH IS IN YOU

This is referring to believers, people relying on God

At the time this was written it would have been Israelites

It applies for us today as we are believers, people who rely on God

WHOSE HEARTS ARE SET ON A PILGRIMAGE

Are we constantly seeking God out?

Do we believe that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob?

The creator of the universe?

Do you believe he is the God that created you, specifically, the way you are?

Do you want to get to know God better?

Do you take steps to know God better?

- Reading his word
- Learning about what He wants for us
- Serving him

Then your heart is set on a pilgrimage toward God.

That's a good thing!

Psalm 84:1-2

¹How lovely is your dwelling place,

LORD Almighty!

²My soul yearns, even faints,

for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and my flesh cry out

for the living God.

If your soul yearns for God, then you're on the right path.

The writer says his heart and flesh cry out for God!

Oh that we cry out for God that strongly!

⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baka,

they make it a place of springs;

the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

The Valley of Baka was a valley outside Jerusalem, from Northern Palestine. Depending on which direction you were coming from, you may have found it convenient to pass through the Valley of Baka

It would have been a lot shorter than going around it – going around it would have meant going over a mountain.

But going through the Valley of Baka there was a difficulty.

The valley was full of bushes and thorns

That meant that you were likely to get cut, stuck and scraped.

That's why Baka means "tears" or "weeping"

The Valley of Baka meant the Valley of Tears and Trials.

Israelites at that time, they journeyed to Jerusalem 3 times a year,

For the 3 feasts or appointed times or celebrations or occasions as called out in the Torah:

- Passover
- Shavuot
- Sukkot

So people would have known about this hazard, the down side about going through the valley.

But they choose the valley anyway because it led to Jerusalem.

It was on their path as people seeking out God.

Why did the writer of Psalm 84 write about a valley leading to Jerusalem?

Because it is a metaphor for life.

We all have trials in life.

Life is full of heartaches and disappointments.

Life is full of tears.

Life begins with crying – a baby is born crying.

Life ends with crying – we mourn for those who die.

We will all go through the valley from time to time.

There is no way around it if we are going to live a godly life.

There is no way around this valley, only through it.

Those things in life that bring us pain or suffering can do one of two things:

- They can either break you
- They can make you into a better person.

Someone once said, “It’s not what happens that matters, it’s how you handle it.”

You can pass through the valley of weeping and come out empty.

Most people never see what the Lord is doing for them in this valley, we must learn to turn our times of sorrow and distress into wells from which we draw the waters of spiritual maturity and growth.

The bible is full of people who passed through the valley and grew from it.

- Moses traveled the Valley of Tears as he fled into the wilderness. But he made in it a well. He rebuilt his relationship with God and became the great leader of the Children of Israel.
- Abraham traveled the Valley of Tears as God led him to that mountaintop to sacrifice his only son upon the altar as a symbol of his faith and obedience to God – but God had a well prepared for Abraham and provided all that was needed.
- Job traveled the Valley of Tears as Satan was allowed to strip away everything that God had blessed Job with – but Job dug a well in the desert, spiritually speaking. He never lost his relationship with the giver of all good things. Job drank from the well of the living water and God restored to him many times more than what he had lost.
- David traveled the “Valley of Tears” as he failed God so many times, even having an illegitimate son from another man’s wife and watching God take that son away from him because of his sin. But David made a well asking God to forgive him (Psalm 51). God still called David a man after God’s own heart even through all of David’s failures.
- Jesus came through the valley of temptations. And his valley didn’t stop there. It led to the cross. But in the end he found the well of eternal life.

I once had a foster kid who came from a home where

- His father physically assaulted him
- His mother sexually assaulted him

Through it all he had a strong relationship with God.

God gave him lots of people along the way to help him through it.

When we grew up, he became a psychologist.

When I asked him why he said it's because he wants to help others that have been in the same situation.

As someone who had been in that situation, he understood what it felt like, how it impacted him, and how to reach others in that situation.

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.

It's not saying that God wants bad things to happen to us.

It's not saying that God causes bad things to happen to us.

It's saying that we can take the bad things that happen in our lives and use the experiences for good, for God!

I wish I could say that as believers in God, as followers of God, if we did everything right, which we can't, we wouldn't have any valleys.

But that's not the case.

That's not life.

And the bible never promises that.

We it does say that God will be with us through our valleys.

Psalm 18:16-19

¹⁶He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.

¹⁷He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.

¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.

¹⁹He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.

That's why, in our piece today, it says

Psalm 84:7

⁷They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

God will give us the strength to get through ... whatever.

The road in life is not an easy road to travel, but it is better if we let Jesus lead the way.

That means we have to trust God, listening and obeying his direction out of the valley.

Thus the last verse of Psalm 84 is verse 12:

¹²LORD Almighty,
blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Sometimes we struggle with God's promptings and directions.
God tells us to go *here* and do *this*, and those are not what we expect.
As a result, our obedience to his direction is less than a follower of God should have.

When that happens, we miss the blessings God has for us.

We need to trust in God.

When

- We are frustrated with work
- We struggle with relationships
- We wonder what we should be doing with our lives
- When finances seem like a continual struggle

We need to trust God.

We will all find ourselves in the Valley of Baca from time to time.

When that happens, trust God and obey.

Then we will get out of the valley and be closer to God.

2 Peter 1:4

He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

There is a special group of people whose job is hard, exciting, frightening and important all at the same time. They do SAR; Search and Rescue. They work near Reno, Nevada and work ski resorts and desert rescue. They pull people off of Mt. Hood, find lost hikers in the Cascade Mountains and recover bodies from the Columbia Gorge. They use boats and helos to brave the rough seas of the Oregon coast.

One specific part of this fraternity is the US Coast Guard whose SAR motto is; "This we do so others may live."

Depending on how we live our lives, we may never need these special people.

No matter how you live your life, you will find yourself in the valley of Baca.

When that happens, remember, God is the best SAR.