

Baca's Vale

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- [0 : 00] You will find my text this morning in the book of Psalms, in Psalm 84 and at verse 6.
Psalm 84, verse 6.
- Who passing through the valley of Beka make it a well, the rain also filleth the pool. Psalm 84 is in all probability a song of pilgrimage.
- It was a song sung by the pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem to one or other of the great religious festivals of the Jewish people.
- It is a song that speaks of the tremendous longing of those pilgrims for the courts of God's house there and indeed their tremendous longing for God himself.
- Evidently the way to Jerusalem led for them through a valley known as the Valley of Beka. We cannot at all identify this valley in any geographical sense now.
- [1 : 22] Probably we will never be able to do so. But it was a dry, arid, dark, gloomy place. Noted for its lack of moisture and for its consequent barrenness.
- The word Beka very likely means weeping. It was the valley of weeping, the veil of tears.
- Pilgrims heavenward still from time to time have to make their way through the valley of weeping, the veil of Beka. Thank God that our whole Christian pilgrimage does not lie through that way.
- There are in the Christian pilgrimage rich pasture lands to pass through abounding joys and exhilarating delights.
- Generally the Christian life is a marvelously joyful life. But at times it does lie through Beka's veil, the valley of weeping.
- [2 : 33] Are you at present, my Christian friend, traveling through Beka's veil? Do you have to meet with difficult and trying and hard experiences?
- Are you finding that from time to time you go aside to weep, to weep your bitter tears? Is it that you are more conscious of God's frown than of his smile upon you?
- Could it be that you have lost to a considerable extent the comforting sense of his presence and of his nearness and the sense of the joy of his salvation?
- If that is so, then there is here in this psalm for you great encouragement. I want to make two points this morning.
- Let us notice in our text, first of all, human responsibility. Human responsibility. What is it that our text says concerning those who are traveling through the valley of Beka?
- [3 : 40] It says that they make it a well. They dig up springs there. They dig their wells there. They do this.
- They do not sit and wail and bemoan their lot. Dark and dreary and dismal and depressing, though the valley of Beka is.
- No, they take action. They do something about the situation. They set to and they dig for water. They dig their wells.

They dig their springs. They work away until they unearth the bubbling springs of fresh, cooling, refreshing water.

And this surely speaks to us when we have to walk through Beka's veil on our journey heavenward.

[4 : 34] It speaks to us, does it not, of a faith that dares dig blessings out of hardship. When you strike a difficult patch in your Christian life, when your way lies through Beka's veil, when the troubles multiply, how do you react?

Do you give in at such a time? Do you give in to despair and to discouragement? Do you say to yourself, it will always be like this. There will never be for me a better day.

I'll never know joy and encouragement again. Do you give in to such despair? Or do you say to yourself at such a time, what is the lesson that God is teaching me in this situation in which I find myself today?

Are you resolved to extract from the difficult circumstances in which you may be finding yourself, all the blessing that there is in them for you?

Are you resolved that you will prove yet again, in these circumstances, God's faithfulness? And so have your own faith further strengthened.

[5 : 54] You know, my friends, troubles make or break us. Are you resolved that they will be to you a great blessing?

For remember this, God will never call upon you to bear more than you can endure. We read in the New Testament, God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted, to be tried, beyond what we are able to bear.

But he will, with the temptation, he will, with the trial, make a way of escape that you might be able to bear it. Do you then, in Beka's valley, dig the well?

What are the well that in the valley of Beka you and I should be digging? They are the well that others have already dug and where they have found their refreshment in days and in years and centuries gone by.

It may well be that these wells need to be reopened by us. Just as Isaac had to go and reopen the wells that his father Abraham had dug in the land of Gerah, at which the Philistines had stopped up.

[7 : 17] For we read in the book of Genesis that Isaac dug again the wells of water that his father Abraham had dug. What are those wells then that we may need to reopen to dig again?

There is, first of all, the well of the Bible. The well of the Bible. There is not a problem that you face, not a difficulty that you encounter, but the Bible has something to say about it.

The solution to your difficulty is found in the Bible, in the teaching of the Word of God. Whatever the difficulty you may be facing, the solution is found in the proper understanding and application of the doctrines of the Word of God.

Is it that you have committed some sin that troubles you? Well then, the Word of God comes to you and it says, God is faithful if we confess our sins.

He is faithful and he is righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity. God pardons fully and completely those who come in faith to Christ seeking that forgiveness.

[8 : 40] Christ's blood has made a full and a complete atonement for all the sins of all God's people. Is your problem a besetting sin that constantly overcomes you?

Then the Bible comes and says to you, sin shall not have dominion over you. You can overcome that besetting sin. Paul says, I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.

That's the Bible's teaching. Is your problem one of relationships? The Bible has a great deal to say.

It is teaching to give about all human relationships. It is teaching to give about the relationship between parents and children, between husband and wife, between employer and employee, between a Christian and another Christian, a Christian person and other Christians, his brothers and sisters in the Lord.

It is teaching concerning the relationship between a man and his neighbor, or between a man and his very enemy. And not only does the Bible deal with spiritual matters, it is teaching to give about every aspect of our life here in this world.

[10 : 08] For God, you see, is not only our Redeemer, he is our Creator also. In the Bible, God speaks to you about whatever matter is troubling you as you travel through Baker's Vale.

Are you listening to what he has to say to you, what the Bible is saying to you? When you find yourself in difficulty, when you find yourself traveling through Baker's Vale, do you go more than ever to your Bible?

Are you digging this well? The well of the Bible. Then also there is the well of prayer. The well of prayer.

You're in the valley. Things are going against you. You're meeting with difficulty and trouble and trial. There are many troubles that you face.

Do they keep you away from the place of prayer? Or do they send you there more often? Do you keep on praying about that matter that is troubling you?

[11 : 22] God has promised to hear, to answer the prayers of his people. Whatsoever things you desire, Jesus said, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

God sometimes permits his people to go through the valley of Baker in order that they might become more prayerful, in order that they might develop a greater dependence upon himself, and so be brought into a closer walk with him.

And when that happens, the valley of Baker becomes for the people of God a place of tremendous blessing. You've been in Baker's Vale.

You've been there for some time now. You're not out of it yet. Tell me, my friend, are you more prayerful today than when you entered that valley a year ago or whenever it was?

Are you digging this well, the well of prayer? But then there's a third well I want to mention. The well of the Bible, the well of prayer, and thirdly, the well of Christian fellowship.

[12 : 38] The well of Christian fellowship. Those pilgrims making their way up to Jerusalem, they traveled together. And as they traveled, they talked together, they sang together, and they worshiped together.

Brotherly communion was for them a well that greatly refreshed them as they went through this dark and gloomy valley.

And when we are called to walk through the same veil, one of our principal sources of refreshment and of strength and of health will undoubtedly be Christian fellowship.

It is right and proper that we lay very great stress upon individual prayer and individual Bible study. these are of the utmost importance.

But I sometimes fear that in stressing them as we so correctly do, we tend to play down the importance of Christian fellowship.

[13 : 51] It is of monumental importance. When you find yourself, or any of us, finds himself in difficulty, we should be able to share our problems, share our burdens, with others who will so help us when this way we bear one another's burdens.

To have another Christian to whom one can go and to whom one can speak freely and in complete confidence, one whom we know will help us and pray for us is vital.

Ah, there is something far wrong in any Christian congregation where a person feels isolated. Then too, there are the gatherings of God's people as they meet for worship.

As we meet for worship here, on the Sabbath day or on other occasions, we should be so conscious of the Lord's own presence among us. There's a special promise given to such gatherings, where two or three are gathered together in my name.

There am I, says Jesus, in the midst. Please wind tape to the end and turn to side two for the remainder of this address. The well of Christian fellowship, are you actively seeking a fellowship of God's people.

[15 : 26] Human responsibility. They make it a place of well. They make it a well. Human responsibility.

But then, the second point I want to make this morning is divine sovereignty. Divine sovereignty. And we have that in the second half of verse 6. The rain also filleth the pool.

Those people travelling through Baker's Vale, we're told they dig the wells, the springs of water. There's human enterprise involved. God gives the springs, but there must be human responsibility.

There must be human endeavour. Those people must go and dig the wells. We must ourselves make use of the means of grace that God has given us.

But then too, there in Baker's Vale, the rain falls from heaven. The rain also fills the pools.

[16 : 33] And that owes nothing. Absolutely nothing to human enterprise. God sends the rain. We find refreshment, not only in the wells of water that we dig there in Baker's Vale, but we find it also in the heaven-sent rain which God himself sends us.

In what ways then, independently of human endeavour, does God refresh his people as they travel through the valley of Baker?

Let me mention three. First of all this, he gives to them the sense of his presence. He gives to them the sense of his presence.

Do you know what it is to be in this valley and to feel deserted? You no longer have the sense of God's nearness and of his presence with you.

you feel that he has abandoned you. You feel that he has withdrawn from you. You know that he has withdrawn from you the comforting sense of his own presence.

[17 : 50] Your very assurance seems to waver and you ask yourself am I his at all? And then he comes and he gives to you a very marvellous sense of his own presence you and concerning your own saving interest in him.

You hear him come and say to you when you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you pass through the fire you will not be burnt.

Neither shall the flame kindle upon you. There in the gloomy valley the psalmist was talking about in the 23rd psalm that we were singing their translation says death dark veil there as you go through that gloomy valley you have a sense of your saviour's presence with you and you fear no evil for he is with you his rod and his staff they comfort you.

to have the sense of God presence the awareness of his nearness the assurance of his love for you personally and experiential knowledge of God himself is the most glorious experience a Christian can have this side of eternity and God frequently gives it to his people as they pass through Baker Vale the rain fills the pool in what way does God himself apart from human effort give to his people as they pass through the valley of Baker in what ways does he give them refreshment first of all he gives to them the sense of his presence secondly he gives to them strength he gives to them strength are you in the veil at the moment are you aware that you are laboring under some handicap that you are facing some terrible difficulty or trial for you circumstances at present are so unfavorable in such circumstances

God at times without changing those circumstances at all so strengthens the believer that he is able to bear his adversity and face his difficulty triumphantly and in that way God dishonored the people of the world look on they see the difficulty they see the believer laboring under terrible handicaps or facing some terrible difficulty and they see how he bears it triumphantly and they are able to explain it in no way at all other than by saying it other than with reference to the supernatural they are compelled at such times to say God is with that man God is with that woman and so God is honored the apostle Paul suffered greatly from what he called a thorn in the flesh we don't know what it was he prayed very earnestly to

[21 : 22] God that he would take it away from him he prayed three times to God that he would remove this thorn from him and God answered him by telling him no I'm not removing that thing from you Paul instead you'll find that your strength is made perfect in my grace in my strength my strength is made perfect in your weakness my grace he said to Paul my grace is sufficient for you under the strength which God supplied in a grace which God gave to Paul he bore that adversity whatever it was to God's glory when you find yourself facing some trouble some when you find yourself in circumstances a trouble in that difficulty God can so strengthen you that the rain fills the pools you're in the barren arid valley that the rain fills the pools instead of barren there is refreshment how does

God strengthen and then how does God refresh his people when they travel through the valley of Bacon how does he cause the rain to fill the pools in the valley for them he gives to them the sense of his own presence he gives to them his strength and thirdly this he changes their circumstances he changes their circumstances sometimes he does not change the circumstances he instead as I've been saying he gives to his people the strength all the strength all the grace that they need to bear those difficulties to his honour and to his glory but often he does change their circumstances and this people find that for them their valley of Baker becomes a place of tremendous fruitfulness the rain fills the pool as God comes and he rescues them he delivers them from their difficult and from their trying circumstances he does do that he came to his people suffering slavery and cruel bondage there in

Egypt and he brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey he came to centuries later to his people in captivity in Babylon and elsewhere and he brought them back to their own land queen i mend the lord did las mwn with her made to suffer her blood she had endured it for some twelve years but the Lord didn't say to her I'll strengthen you and give you the needed grace to continue to bear it that's not what he did for her he delivered her he healed her he delivered Jairus from his terrible sorrow he delivered the cripple there by the pool of Bethesda as he delivered countless others and as he has been delivering them down the centuries our God specializes in taking people from the dunghill as we were singing in the 113 psalm and setting them amongst princes he delights to do this when his time to do so has come he says to his people I will turn your sorrow into joy weeping he says to them may endure for a night joy comes in the morning the rain fills the pools how is it that God refreshes his people as they travel through Baker's Vale he comes and he gives to them the sense of his own presence he gives to them his strength he changes their circumstances are you traveling my friend at this moment through this dark vale if so then take heart there in that valley you can dig your well the well of prayer the well of the Bible the well of Christian fellowship with joy you can draw water out of those wells of salvation and remember this too that it is characteristic of our gracious God to surprise us by sending the rain the refreshment just when we are feeling most downcast and most most weary and when he does so then we shall go on from strength to strength until at last we appear in Zion you may this morning be traveling through the dark valley of Baker but for you if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ then the future is bright why not begin your rejoicing and anticipation even now this very morning let us pray

O Lord our gracious God we give thee thanks for thy great goodness to us sometimes we cannot understand thy dealings with us for sometimes on our Christian pilgrimage we do find ourselves traveling through the dark and barren valley of Baker the valley of weeping but we thank thee that we can be assured as we do so that thou thyself but with us even though at times we are not conscious of thy nearness we have the word of God given to every believer I will never leave you nor forsake you we pray that we might find such experiences times of tremendous blessing and that we will remember that thou will turn our sorrow into joy and may we in anticipation rejoice in thee the Lord our God we pray that we will truly know thee that we will be assured of thy great love for us as individuals as those who are thine own children the very apple of thine eye and may we have that experimental knowledge of thine self that will cheer our hearts and encourage us and help us as we make our way and to thee shall be all the praise and glory for Jesus' sake amen