

Facing the Valleys with God

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD” (1 Kings 20:28).

In this passage, after Israel had defeated the Syrian army, the Syrians said that the God of Israel was the God of the hills but not the God of the valleys. So they set out to battle Israel in the plains, but they were again defeated. Israel, though far out-numbered, won the battle in seven days.

Many dear people are going through valleys right now. Some have already faced many different kinds of valleys. And from the cradle until we are face to face with God, we will encounter many more.

Sometimes it seems that the pressures facing

us will overcome us. But God has not left us alone. As this booklet will show, even if just one person is there to be comforted or to be rescued, no place is too deep or too terrible that the Lord will not go. Our God is the God of every valley.

Chapter One

FORGIVENESS IN THE VALLEY

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalm 23:1-6).

Picture King David hiding out in the Judean hills, trying to protect himself from his attackers. His own son Absalom had turned against him (2 Samuel 15) and enlisted David's people to go

against him. Standing at the gate of the city, Absalom had confronted the people: “You don’t have anyone to take care of your problems, do you? You should have someone, and I would be that man.” So, Absalom was able to gather a large group of people—more than David had—to go against his own father. But as he did so, David said, “I will not fight against him. He is my son.”

David, who had failed miserably many times, received forgiveness for himself quickly. Now he was totally free from his past sins. Yes, he had punished Absalom by banishing him from the palace for killing his half brother; but in 2 Samuel 14:21, David was challenged and let Absalom return.

At first, David forgave Absalom for what he had done, but he did not restore him. For two years Absalom lived in the palace but was not allowed to see his father, the King. When David finally forgave Absalom just as God had forgiven him, Absalom was totally restored. Absalom, however, never truly accepted that forgiveness. He had become bitter in his heart against his father, which resulted in a conspiracy against David.

God’s forgiveness delivers us from our past

sins. That is why the Word of God says in Psalm 130:4 that there is forgiveness in God, that He might be trusted. He does not hold onto our sin and remind us of how wicked we are. God forgives us so that we can trust His love for us. Furthermore, when we forgive someone else, God personally blesses us beyond our expectation (Matthew 5:23-24; James 2:13).

Freedom: The Fruit of Forgiveness

We do not forgive others for their sake. We forgive them, first, for Christ's sake, and second, for our sake. This way we will not be in bondage because of what others have done against us, harboring bitterness and unforgiveness against them (Matthew 18:33-35).

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, when He suffered and bled, He died to pay the penalty for our sins. Because we are sinners, there is nothing we can do to remove the judgment against us. We are guilty, and the punishment required is death. But even if we were willing to die, we would still face eternal separation from God and everlasting torment in hell. It took the Just dying for the unjust to set us free, once and for all.

It is vital to understand that true forgiveness

is willing to suffer undue wrong for somebody else. When Jesus Christ died for us, He suffered the punishment for our sins in a terrible way. But through that, He forgave us. And because He paid for our sins, the Father forgave us.

Forgiveness means that someone who has done wrong to me cannot hurt me. By forgiving them, I am setting them free from their past—as far as what they did to me. Therefore, I am willing to go through the consequences of what they did to me without mentally indicting them at all.

Finding Comfort in the Valley

Now, David had fled to the Judean hills. He left his throne. The scepter (representing his authority) was no longer with him. As far as he knew, he would never be king again. He believed his own son would kill him, and he was hiding in the hills. David had no idea how the battle was going, but in the midst of that trial, the Holy Spirit gave him the twenty-third Psalm. He was living in the valley of the shadow of death.

“The valley of the shadow of death” is plural in the original text. Many of us will go through many valleys, and certainly that was true for David. But when he wrote this psalm, the real-

ity of death was very close because of Absalom's numbers against him. So when he said, "The Lord is shepherding me, I shall not want anything," that was a wonderful statement.

And when he wrote, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil"—he was professing an amazing principle.

With the stars out in the Judean hills, his son against him, his throne given up possibly forever, death facing him from his own son, David declared, "God's rod and staff comfort me."

He said, "You prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You have anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

This man of mercy said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." In writing the twenty-third Psalm, David experienced the inspiration of an amazing word from God.

Chapter Two

IN THE VALLEY, GOD
IS ENOUGH

Every one of us knows people—loved ones and friends—who are facing the shadow of death. But I like what David wrote, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow death, *thou art with me.*”

If God is with you, and if He is the source of your supply, that is all you need. If God takes everything from you but He is still with you, that is all you need. If you lose every single thing but you still have the source of life, the source of redemption, and the source of blessings, you have everything you need.

The valley of the shadow of death is something that every person will face. As you face your valley, or as it comes upon you suddenly for whatever reason, you can begin to receive God’s mercy and grace in your time of need by going before His throne (Hebrews 4:16). Face to

face with Him, you will start to realize that the power of death is overestimated. You will realize that death for a believer doesn't have the sting that Satan says it has (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

But even with many believers, there is a fear of death because of a fear of the unknown. We haven't been there before, but Jesus has. Though we die physically, we do not die spiritually. If we are born again and we die, our soul and spirit will go immediately to heaven. Therefore, we can enter into the valley of the shadow of death knowing that He is there to bring us through.

Walking through the Valleys

"And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

"...And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Samuel 15:23, 30).

The next thing that many have faced is the valley of the shadow of suffering in Kidron.

Kidron is on the east gate near the Mount of Olives. Jesus passed over that brook with his disciples to enter the garden where Judas betrayed Him. Also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, it is a valley of suffering.

People who have gone through life in a wheelchair, people who have gone through life with unbelievable diseases in their bodies, parents who have raised a family and had a child who died from an overdose of drugs—all of these have walked through the valley of suffering.

And where is God when we walk through that valley of suffering? “Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they do comfort me.”

No matter how much you suffer in the valley, God *is* the God of that valley, and He will be with you. He is the God of your valley.

A person who has tremendous compassion for others will suffer along with them. He will identify with nearly every valley they go through, weeping when they weep and rejoicing when they rejoice (Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26). Whether the valley is for him or for others, he can say without a doubt, “Thou art with me.”

Rivers of Comfort

Furthermore, he can say, “Thy rod and thy staff, they do comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies,” and he is anointed with oil of the Holy Spirit. His capacity runs over. Goodness and mercy are following him in the situation.

That is what David said. As much as he loved Absalom dearly, he was also concerned for his people, and he wanted to know how the battle was going. But in 2 Samuel 18:33, with the news from his servant that his son was dead and David’s army had won, he cried out, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! I would have died for thee!”

Do you know how David would have liked that battle to have come out? He wished that Absalom had won that battle. That is the kind of heart David had. No doubt, God was with him in the valley of suffering.

The Valley of Chastisement

We must not forget another valley. The valley of Achor was the valley of chastisement (Joshua 7:24, 25). When Achan took the silver, the gold, and a coat for his wife, against God’s

wishes, he thought that to take the spoils of the enemy was a small thing. But God had plainly commanded them not to take of the “accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed” (Joshua 6:17-18). As a result, he and his entire family were stoned to death, and all of their remains and possessions were destroyed with fire.

Thank God, our punishment was placed on Jesus at Calvary. He suffered our afflictions. He was put to death for our sins. Now, the chastisement God gives us for our disobedience to Him, if we receive it, produces peace (Hebrews 12:11) as it restores us to fellowship with God.

Chapter Three

WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE LOVE OF GOD

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

“If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

“Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalm 139:7-10).

In Genesis 14:3-10, the Word of God speaks of another valley—the valley of Siddim, which was full of slime pits. This valley was near Sodom and Gomorrah, the place where, in Genesis 19:29, the Lord remembered Abraham’s prayer to save Lot. There, brimstone and fire came down from heaven to destroy all the inhabitants in Sodom and Gomorrah: the valley of sin (Genesis 19:24).

If only they had known, if only they had re-

alized that even in the valley of sin, God was right there waiting for them.

Psalm 139:8 says, “If I make my bed in hell, thou art there.” Even in that valley of sin, the grace of God is there. In that valley of sin, there is forgiveness, so you can trust Him. In the valley of sin is the love of God that never changes. In the valley of sin is God’s faithfulness, caring and showing compassion without hesitation—right in the valley of sin. It just takes a moment of faith to accept His love and power to overcome the temptations of sin.

The Valley of Decision

“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14).

Another valley we may often face is the valley of decision. In Numbers 13, the Lord commanded Moses to send twelve men—a man from each tribe of Israel—to spy out the promised land of Canaan. These men were to bring a report and a sampling of the fruit. At the brook of Eschol, they cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes. It was so large, they had to carry it out on a staff between two men.

But when they returned to the congregation

of Israel, ten of the spies came back with a negative report. They said, "Surely, the land is flowing with milk and honey. And just look at this fruit! But there are giants in the land, and we are like grasshoppers! We are not able to go up against them" (see Numbers 13:27-29, 33). That is when Caleb spoke up as he made them be quiet, and he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess the land. We are more than able to take it" (see Numbers 13:30).

You may be in a valley of decision. Perhaps it is deciding the geographical will of God for your life, knowing where you are going to serve God, who you will have for a pastor-teacher, what local assembly you will enter into. We are always facing a valley of decision.

You may have to make a decision concerning a relationship. Perhaps you are involved in a relationship that is taking you away from your relationship with God. Whatever it is, remember this: A valley of decision is the most crucial thing, because we live in the consequences of our decisions. God will always give us His Word to guide our feet in His way of peace (Psalm 119:105; Luke 1:79).

Then we also have another valley, and the Word of God calls it the valley of Gehenna.

Gehenna was a valley south of Jerusalem where the garbage was collected. There were always fires burning from all the trash (Mark 9:47-48). It speaks of the sufferings from hell that we experience in our lives—afflictions meant to eternally damage us. This valley is filled with demonic wounds. It is a valley that is filled with evil. It is a valley filled with satanic scars and bruises. And the Bible says that God is there (Psalm 139:8). He is the God of every single valley—even the ones that the devil puts us in. The Lord is our provision against satanic evil.

Finding the Source of Life in Your Suffering

Throughout the Bible, God has made it very clear that we will face many valleys in our lifetime. If it is the valley of suffering you are facing, and if you lose everything, take heart. Many of us have gone through that valley, and God was our Source. And if you have the Source, you can afford to lose anything. He is still the Lord in the valley of suffering.

We even may be in that valley of sin, and everyone can meet God in their valley of sin. That is where we really get to know His faithfulness, His forgiveness, and His lovingkindness.

In the valley of decisions, we learn that to choose God is to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19). We live in the consequences of our choices in the valley of decisions.

In the valley of Gehenna, we may be wounded and bruised, damaged by Satan's plan to destroy our capacity for God. But God is there, even in that valley.

And after all we go through in those valleys, God says there is also the valley of Jezreel (Judges 6:33). In the valley of Jezreel, our enemies are pitched against us. But God will give us a miraculous victory there, just as He did with Gideon.

The Valley of Triumph

Finally, when God comes back with His Bride, the Church, we will see the end of the battle of Armageddon. In that valley, the armies of the antichrist will be defeated. The blood will be up to the horses' bridles, in a river ten miles long filled with blood.

Picture it: the valley of Armageddon, the valley of bloodshed, where the Church will be with her Savior and her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. We will come back with Him in that amazing victory.

Not one shot will be fired. Jesus will speak

the Word, and the battle will be over. We will enter the scene on glorified white horses, and the Lord Jesus Christ will defeat the enemy simply by speaking the Word. The Word of God will be on His forehead in that valley of bloodshed, and the Church will be triumphant.

He Leads Us beside Still Waters

For every valley we face, Jesus is Lord. He is the God of the valleys.

We are all going to go through valleys, I'll guarantee you. And guaranteed, you have already been through valleys. But whatever the valley you go through, remember that God wants you to know He is God of the valleys just as much as He is God of the hills.

You are just as spiritual when you are in the valley as you are on the mountain top. Your maturity is revealed in the valley. When you are in the valley, let your confession be according to the Word of God. Overwhelming victory can be ours. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37).

David was out there that night, and he said, "I don't fear any evil. I have walked with God. Yes, I have failed. I have fallen down. But God

picked me up. God is my Shepherd. God is shepherding me. I don't want a single thing."

Natural thinking would have wanted vengeance against his son. But David said, "I don't want a single thing. Why? Because God is my Shepherd, and He is making me to lie down in green pastures."

When David said, "He leadeth me beside the still waters," his soul was quiet, his heart was peaceful. He was filled with relaxation and faith rest, because he knew that God was the God of the valley.

CONCLUSION

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in” (Isaiah 58:12).

David was a repairer of the breach. When he was in a very deep valley, his heart after God was revealed. He didn’t criticize the breach—the places that were broken down, that were like a garbage heap. He wanted to repair it.

When you are in a valley, it is easy to be overwhelmed by sight. Your situation may seem impossible. But remember that you are not alone in that valley. God is with you. Remember Jesus’ agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Even the joy that was set before Him did not prevent Him from sweating drops of blood as He groaned.

Instead of criticizing situations, be a repairer of the breach, a restorer of the way that you dwell in. Don’t criticize people. Repair what is

wrong. And when forgiveness comes into your heart, you will be free, and you will set others free to come alongside as you go on to victory.