

The Purpose of the Valley

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

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

Every child of God is called to go through many different kinds of trials, heartaches, and battles. Every Christian, at one time or another, will be asked by God to go through valley experiences.

Some will suffer because of the loss of someone or something very precious. Others will experience problems that they just cannot handle, naturally speaking. Often humbling and difficult to understand, these situations require a supernatural touch from the Lord.

At times, it seems as if after coming out of one valley, we find ourselves right back in the midst of another one. Still, one thing I know for certain is this: The purpose of every valley is to reveal to us the life of the One who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

Yes, there is a purpose to be found in every valley we pass through. Our prayer, as you read this booklet, is that the Father's love and grace

will establish the specifics of this subject in your heart and help you to see God's purpose in every one of your valleys.

Chapter One

THE ONLY SURE
SOURCE OF STRENGTH

“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

“My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

“Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

“Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

“O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give

ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

“Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

“O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee” (Psalm 84:1-12).

The valley experience is one that places me in a low position. It can be very humiliating. Furthermore, it is something I cannot overcome or understand. Pain and sorrow and agony may surround me for no discernable reason. Sometimes the valley involves a weakness in my flesh that I cannot overcome, even though I have heard the answers preached and taught to me.

In Psalm 84, the condition and attitude of the psalmist was that he longed to be back in the courts of the Lord; he wanted to be in church. His desire was for the living God to hold him, and his heart began to cry out to the Lord. Then, he took a walk outside of the tabernacle—the building where the people of God worship—

and he saw sparrows nesting near the altar of God. The psalmist was deeply moved by this illustration of God's creation, and he compared it to us having faith-rest in the presence of the Lord.

There are many different personalities in our midst. Many different trials and difficulties are causing hearts to cry out for the living God. For some it is a physical disease, perhaps an affliction that is undefined and misunderstood. For others, domestic and financial situations never seem to be resolved. Misunderstandings have left some people feeling very lonely, alienated from friends and relatives. Needs seemingly are not being met in some lives, and these situations are becoming valleys for them.

God wants to open the eyes of our hearts to see His purpose in every single one of these situations.

Rest in His Presence

David, at the time of writing Psalm 84, was discouraged and disturbed. That was when God opened his eyes to observe the sparrows caring for their young. Living in the refuge provided by the house of God, these birds were very content and happy in their habitat with God.

This illustration supplied David with a great revelation of God's care for him. "Oh, Lord," he said. "I am filled with fear, guilt, shame, and anxiety. I am crying out to You, the living God. God, I want You to be Lord in me. Let me be happy, just as the sparrow is happy and carefree living around your altars."

Then, David arrived at a great conclusion: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." He realized that he was going through a serious and difficult trial. It was a terrific battle, and he had just realized that his strength must come totally from Christ. David needed to become consumed with the Master, because no one but the Lord was in this valley with him.

If we can learn to go through the valleys in God's strength—and only God's strength—then these times will only make us stronger. We will come out viewing the valleys as great sources of blessing and refreshment. We will stand before God in victory and triumph.

Chapter Two

FRESH RAIN
AND LIVING WATERS

A young mother lost her baby—a four-month-old girl who seemed very healthy until she died in her crib. The mother had lost her husband in a terrible accident just months before the child was born. She accepted Christ just before giving birth, and now the baby was gone. She struggled mightily, to the point of asking God to take her home so she could be with her husband and child.

What was the purpose of this trial for this mother? We have to go to the Word of God and trust Jesus Christ. The answers are there for us. God wanted her to have Him be her help and shelter, just as He was the help and shelter for the sparrow in Psalm 84. The sparrow nested in the shadow of the temple of God, in the midst of the Lord's beautiful altars. Sparrows dwelt right in the midst of the tabernacle, and that is where

God wanted this young, hurting mother to dwell.

Our Great Need of Grace

No words could explain to that young woman God's purpose for her sorrow. All we can do is help her to see that through it, Jesus Christ wants to be her strength. He wants to lead her along from strength to strength to strength. The Lord wants her to be able to trust Him and to love God no matter what has happened to her. Her great need is to receive His grace so that she can receive His comfort and love, to trust Jesus Christ so that she can see this deep valley become a place of blessing.

God can and will make this woman's valley a place of fresh rain, a place where pools are filled with fresh water, a place where she can come before the Lord in the victory of faith to honor the Lord Jesus. She will stand as a testimony to His faithfulness before the hosts of angels and demons involved in the angelic warfare. We pray that she will be able to say as David said, "The Lord will give glory and grace."

The circumstances we face will not hurt us. The level of difficulty and pain we experience is

not a problem. The Lord will pour out grace and glory to give us strength. His glory is over us, and He will not withhold good things from us.

This is the purpose of our every valley.

This is exactly what God is trying to teach us, and He desires that we would receive His grace and His glory so we can know Him more.

Refreshment for Others

Some parents are raising children who have physical or mental disabilities. They love God and they love their children very much. Yes, they would so much enjoy waking up and finding that their children are just as other children. But that does not happen, and they go forward in a valley that seems to have no end.

Certainly there are times when we are overwhelmed by our circumstances, times when all we can do is focus on our situation. But the Lord is teaching us daily, and He wants to be first in all things that pertain to us. He leads us through the valley where we will learn that one day the trump shall sound and we shall all be with Christ. Every one of us who is born again will have a perfect body, and we will reside in the perfect place that Jesus is preparing for us.

Every valley lasts for just a season, and we

need to receive the grace and the glory of God as we pass through it. The situation, the valley itself, really brings us nothing, but at the end of the valley, we will look back and see how God brought us through. We may not understand how it happened, but we will recognize His purpose.

Valley experiences serve the Body of Christ. As we walk through in the light of the Lord, we will overcome the anxieties and worries that try to distract us. All we go through will work together for good.

Perhaps you are enduring physical pain. This suffering is your valley. Maybe you are experiencing depression. You have heard much about how to overcome this problem, but it is so difficult for you, and you condemn yourself. Please remember that you are only passing through. You cannot save yourself in the situation, yet God will send stronger members of the Body to build you up and to honor you. You can draw life as they minister to you the very grace and glory of Jesus Christ.

Even depression—as deep and destructive a valley as that can be—can have a purpose. Weakness carries purpose. God wants you to know that as you are passing through these

times, you can go with Him from strength to strength. The valleys are never wasted. No matter how devastated you may feel, God wants you to see His purpose in your valleys.

God wants every valley to be a place of great blessing as we receive His grace and replace our strength with His strength. He wants us to experience what it means to rest in Him alone. He wants to bring us to the place where we give Him all the honor and all the glory, and so we can receive all the grace He has to offer.

The Lord will supply fresh rain—rains from heaven that will purify us through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Chapter Three

ABANDONED TO CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:9-11).

The Lord wants us to learn to go through valleys and allow them to make us stronger. Then we can be blessings to others, filling up the pools with water that refreshes and encourages. In the valley, God and God alone can truly bless us. There is nothing for us to glory in, nothing to rely on, nothing to depend upon but Jesus Christ.

For this reason, we are brought to the end of

ourselves. Some of these difficult circumstances, some of these unusual valleys, are allowed into our lives in order for us to learn to depend and rely only upon Him. He alone becomes all in all in our lives.

Squeezing Out Natural Tendencies

Valleys squeeze the natural out of our lives. We come to the place where there is no strength left in us. We become so downhearted that there is no courage left. We experience such heartache that there is no trace of natural ability. When we come to the end of our rope, all of our natural love, natural desires, natural purposes, and natural affections are exhausted.

It is in the valley that we find we can rely only upon Jesus. We enter a new dimension, a new grace, a new glory, and a new peace that goes beyond anything we have ever experienced. There we begin to receive and to express inexhaustible power that we cannot explain.

Parents who are quietly and lovingly caring for a child with disabilities understand this. Not a whole lot is said, but their lives and the child's sweet and very honest expressions are blessings to all who know them. They go through their valleys, and the pools of our lives are filled with

the refreshing springs that come through them. Watching their attitudes in afflictions helps me through my own adversities.

I know a couple who face tremendous obstacles in daily living because of a physical handicap, yet they always seem so content. They never complain, and they are such a great testimony. God honors them as people who rely on Him and Him alone for their strength. Stronger and stronger they grow as they go through their valleys.

One woman lost a son and then a husband to suicide. But, glory to God, she keeps moving on with Christ through these dark, dark valleys. She knows what it means to pass through and find strength in Christ in the midst of chaos and weakness. She glorifies God and is able to come before Him with grace.

There are many valleys you will be called to venture through, and God's purpose is for you to learn that Christ alone is your strength.

The Way to Total Trust

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

"He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him" (Job 13:15-16).

“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Think about Job. He lost all of his cattle. He lost seven sons and three daughters and their families. Boils came upon his body and then his wife told him, “Curse God and die!”—not exactly what I call encouragement. But Job came to know just what it means to have Jesus as his only friend.

God has a plan for our future. He will keep putting us in places that will reduce us to the lowest common denominator, where Jesus alone is our strength. He takes us where we rely only on Christ in every trial and every temptation.

He has some valleys in front of us. Some may be very deep. The purpose of these valleys will not be to hurt or to chastise. They do not happen because of wrong things we have done. The purpose of these valleys is to teach us to pass through a situation and give God the glory as we see grace meet our every need. The purpose is to open our eyes to see that He will withhold no good thing. He wants us to get as close to God as we can possibly get.

Some of you have family members you desperately want to see saved. That is your valley,

your heartache, your grief. You refuse to quit. You keep appearing before God with prayer and praise. You keep manifesting His glory a little at a time. As you honor God through the valley, you grow in Him.

In the valley, we see the grace of God. We rest in His glory and enjoy all the good things He gives us in the midst of it. We serve others with the grace we are receiving while we honor Christ in the midst of our trials. Jesus Christ is glorified (not a man). We are edified, and we reap the rewards. We get to know doctrine more and more. We learn how to receive His life in the midst of death, and we get to know His grace and to experience His glory.

Chapter Four

FROM DEFEAT TO VICTORY, FROM DEATH TO RESURRECTION

“And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

“And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

“He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

“And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

“And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

“And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire,

and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

“When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

“And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; inso-much that many said, He is dead.

“But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose” (Mark 9:17-27).

Jesus and three disciples—Peter, James, and John—came down from the Mount of Transfiguration where they had witnessed Moses and Elijah in a meeting with Christ. Immediately, they were confronted with a man with a need. The man’s son was possessed by a demon, but none of the disciples could help him.

That is what I would call a major valley experience.

What was the purpose of that experience? It was for the father to meet Someone who could deliver and heal his son.

Some valleys happen for no other reason than for us to meet Jesus personally and to be healed by Him of whatever is troubling us. Jesus wants to meet us and deliver us from afflictions and problems.

Sometimes, we are called to an impossible valley, a situation or circumstance that is absolutely beyond human remedy. Jesus is there to do the impossible, challenging us to meet Him by His Spirit and to discover His particular purpose.

The great thing about the passage in Mark 9 is Jesus' response to the father's honest plea to help his unbelief. If you are having trouble believing God, then honestly come to Him and say, "Lord, I believe; but help my unbelief." Be honest. Tell Jesus all about it, and He will do the job for you.

Meeting God in the Valley

The apostle John was an old, old man—possibly ninety—when he was shipped to the Isle of Patmos. It was a secure place for the Roman Empire to put criminals and the insane. Other disci-

ples had been martyred. Not John. He was burned with hot oil three times. The oil penetrated the skin and was extremely painful, but it did not kill John, so he was taken to a place of no return.

Imagine the pain in John's body and the screams and agony he saw in the other people left on Patmos. This valley was overwhelming.

There, however, Jesus appeared to John in His resurrected, glorified presence. "Fear not," Jesus said to John. The purpose of this valley was to prepare John to meet Jesus and to receive and write down the Revelation—a great vision of the glorified Savior who loved him personally.

Some of you are going through difficult times, and the glorified Christ wants to tell you, "Fear not—I am with you." He desires to help you, to deliver you, to minister to you. He wants to give you faith and strength.

Jesus Went through First

Jesus Himself passed through great valleys on His way to Calvary. He had no place to lay His head. His people, and even His own family, rejected Him. His disciples forsook Him.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was in such agony that blood leached out of his pores. God's own Son sweat great drops of blood. The loneliness of the hour, the terrible excruciating exhaustion of human life, weighed on Jesus.

But Jesus went through to the Cross. Once there, He could hardly speak. All of our sins were placed upon Him, and He sensed the Father turning away from Him. Glory could not look upon the iniquity He had taken upon Himself. The valley was too much and He cried, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

Then, Jesus committed His spirit to the Father and He died, finishing the work of paying for our sins and winning our redemption. Three days later came His resurrection. The valley Jesus went through led to eternal life for us all.

He entered into the valley of death. What He left behind was an empty tomb. What He won for us was eternal life. Death's sting was defeated.

Christ's valley carries a glorious victorious purpose.

CONCLUSION

Out of our valley will come victory. Out of it will come joy. From death will come life. From turmoil will come peace. God will lead us through the valley, building patience and strength in our hearts. In the midst of these times, we will learn to hear Him speak to our hearts, "Peace be unto you."

The joy of God will fortify your faith. When you find yourself in sickness, love and grace will come in and heal your affliction, comforting you in the midst of it. Death will give way to life. Weaknesses will give way to Resurrection power. Trials and temptations will give way to love, grace, and glory. The Spirit comes in with fresh power, giving grace and withholding no good thing.

The purpose of our valley is to learn to live in Christ, to glorify Him in it and to discover Resurrection life in the One who was dead, who is now alive forevermore.