

Text: Psalm 84, Psalm 30

Title: A Valley of Weeping?

Truth: God brings His people through times of weeping and they give thanks to Him.

Date/Location: 10/12/2022 at FBC and 10/13/2022 at Hope Community Bible Church (Anchor Bible College chapel)

Question

About Psalm 84: I was told that the Valley of Baca meant Valley of Weeping. We have some dear church members who are going through the Valley of Weeping now and understanding that Psalm would help us to minister to them.

I. Psalm 84

Psalm 84 is generally categorized as a praise hymn and song of Zion. The focus is on the God's tabernacle/temple and the joy that the people have being around it, wanting to be there, and traveling there during the feasts. That place represents to them God Himself and His goodness to the people of Israel.

A literal reading of the text indicates that the Valley of Baca is a physical place that was on the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem. The faithful would pass by or through that location on their journey.

The word Baca is הַבַּכָּא in Hebrew, with the prefixed article attached at the beginning of the word. It is used in 2 Samuel 5:23-24 and clearly refers there to a kind of tree or bush. Some suggestions for the specific kind of tree are mulberry, aspen, or balsam.

The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible suggests that it is unknown whether this is a literal place or a symbolic expression of grief or hardship. Spurgeon suggests in his *Treasury of David* that this should be rendered the Valley of Bochim, Weeping, following Judges 2:1-5 where the people of Israel wept when the Angel of the Lord rebuked them for not being obedient.

People do indeed sometimes pass through metaphorical valleys of difficulty (like the valley of the shadow of death, Psalm 23:4).¹ But the Hebrew word for weeping, though it sounds the same, is spelled differently: בכה with a “he” at the end instead of an “aleph.”

A second hesitation I have with using this psalm as a comfort for those in weeping is that the message of the psalm is one of praise and triumph, going from strength to strength, not from weakness to strength. The message of the psalm suggests that although that location *may in the past* been a place of mourning, in this situation it was not a place of weeping because the pilgrims were anticipating a joyful reunion with God at the temple.

II. Psalm 30

May I suggest an alternative Psalm that better fits the need for comfort in times of difficulty? It is Psalm 30, a

¹ There are other metaphorical valleys in Scripture. For instance, the “valley of decision,” a real place, focuses on the judgment that will happen there (Joel 3:14). “Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low” in Isaiah 40:4 uses the idea of smoothing the way for incoming royalty, but the main issue is not topographical: it is spiritual. John the Baptist called for people to repent in order to see the salvation of God. He was one of the advance messengers of the Messiah and Luke says he did this in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Luke 3:3-6).

thanksgiving psalm written by King David. It seems to be written from an individual's perspective. It does not seem to be a *national* thanksgiving psalm although it does call all David's people to follow his example of singing praise and remembering God.

The Psalm offers thanks for God's aid in moving from a situation of great difficulty to one of blessing. This is an oft-used pattern in the psalms, where a lamentation is turned into joy by the end of the Psalm. In this case, the Psalm iterates back and forth between difficulties and God's deliverance:

Blessing	Difficulties
You have lifted me up	You have not let my foes rejoice over me
You healed me	You brought my soul up from the grave.
You kept me alive	That I should not go down to the pit
His favor is for life	His anger is but for a moment
But joy comes in the morning	Weeping may endure for a night
I shall never be moved	You hid your face, and I was troubled
Into dancing	You have turned my mourning
Clothed me with gladness	You have put off my sackcloth

David, writing at the dedication of the temple, ends by saying that he will give thanks to God forever. Paul

echoes that when he says, “In everything give thanks” in 1 Thess. 5:18.

Rehearsing the Lord’s faithfulness in the lives of God’s people in times of difficulty is a help and encouragement to those who are afflicted by hardship.

III. Other Passages for Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 in very difficult situations, where God is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our tribulations so that we can help others later on in our lives.

1 Thess. 4:18 in the death of loved ones.

1 Thess. 5:11 general comfort.

Romans 15:5 God is again described as the God of comfort.

Conclusion

May God bring comfort to all who are in distress in our churches.

Remember too that it is not just portions of Scripture considered and applied with the help of God’s Spirit that bring comfort. God very often uses *believing people* to bring comfort to others in the church family. He uses the preaching of the word by our Bible teachers, the presence of encouraging people, the service of dedicated helpers, the gifts of generous givers, and the prayers of the saints. All these different ways help those in need to make it through their difficult times.

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