

VALLEYS, PLACES OF REFLECTION

Solitude, the master of a valley, predominates the silence of the place. No outside voices, noises, only the mind working the past and dreaming the future. It is the place to get near our God. In prayer and anguish of the soul, we very much depend on Him to alleviate the heavy burden that took us over there. However, it is transient or impermanent as we must go through it to reach our final destination. Many of us give up, without the strength to go on, because our spiritual and mental situations are rachitic and in need of help from above, where our help comes from. But it is precisely in the valley that we receive our strength. It is there that we are broken and more willing to listen. If you and I want to know our God, the valley is a good place to be.

When David was in the wilderness of Judah, he wrote Psalm 63, which reads, God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You; my inner self thirsts for You, my flesh longs and is faint for You, in a dry and weary land where no water is... My whole being follows hard after You and clings closely to You; Your right hand upholds me... (verses 1,8). Many of David's psalms are based on his experiences in the wilderness or valley. Painful as it was, he never forsook God. His beliefs were firmed on his faith that God existed and that He answers prayers. He understood the benefits of suffering, as he reflected while facing the wilderness or valley. He said, It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statute; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now Your word do I keep (Ps. 119:67,71). He used the challenges before him to acknowledge God's faithfulness and love. His life was a testimony of endurance in his faith in all the psalms we read. God's purpose for every believer in suffering is to equip each of us to get to know Him. Without the valleys and wildernesses of life, we would not know our God's faithfulness, His compassion, and all that that His attributes denote. It is said, "No pain, no gain." A Christian that has had all without going through deserts and valleys, it is a Christian that does not know God. Or better yet, he is not a Christian at all. The valleys have their twists and uncertainties, they have a way to change and break us; it is in the valley that we are molded, fulfilling God's purpose for our life.

There are many other heroes of the faith that stood firmly in the storm of life besides David. The Prophet Jeremiah, for example, who was thrown in a dungeon and left there for many days for warning his people of danger ahead, endured the scorn of king and princess. His valley was hard and difficult, for his people were a people of stone heart and rebellious against their God. Yet, he remained faithful to God, Who had chosen him to be a prophet. This is what the Lord told him: Before I formed you in the womb I knew and approved of you, and before you were born, I separated and set you apart, consecrating you and appointed you as a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5). The valleys Jeremiah went through assured him of God's faithfulness through it all. Here are the comforting words from the Lord: For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. Then you will call upon Me, and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear and heed you (Jer. 29:11-12); and behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for Me? (Jer. 32:27). The writer to the Hebrews well defined the sufferings of

many of the heroes and heroines of the faith in their valley of death without giving up, but enduring the pain; he wrote: Others had to suffer the trial of mocking and scourging and even chains and imprisonment; they were stone to death; they were lured with tempting offers; they were sawn asunder; they were slaughtered by the sword; [while they were alive] they had to go about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated- [Men] of whom the world was not worthy – roaming over the desolate places and the mountains, and in caves and caverns and holes of the earth (Heb.11:36-38). We do not have any idea what suffering is about, when we read about these heroes and heroines of the faith. Although, today in several countries where the freedom of religion is denied, many are suffering terribly for love of God. A valley was set before them, but as the heroes of the faith of the past, they have endured and are enduring the hardships of the valley.

There are many valleys we must cross to reach our spiritual destination. Life of a true Christian is not easy, as it was not easy for our Lord, YAHSHUA when on earth. Men made valleys of persecution against Christians are for sure to come. Our Lord so said, If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; (John 15:20b). Persecution will come in one way or another for all those of the faith in YAHSHUA. He warned us saying, In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world, (John 16:33b). Let's not reject the valleys or wildernesses of life, for they are the means through which we achieve maturity of faith; they are the means through which we will know how faithful and how loving our God is. Our tears shed in the valleys are collected and remembered by our Lord, Who, in due time, will accomplish His purpose for us. His presence with us is also His participation in our pain and struggles. It is not pleasant to Him witnessing our suffering without feeling what we feel. His word then becomes reality in the fact that when I am weak, I am strong (II Cor. 12:9-11). And I can do all things because He strengthens me (Phil. 4:13). The power of His presence in me is active to overcome the valleys. Someone once said, "When life is not a bed of roses, remember Who wore the thorns." Yes, His love continues spreading its wings farther than we can imagine to embrace and comfort us in our most difficult paths in the valley. Sometimes slippery, sometimes rocky, sometimes hard to see the next step, we lose our footing and fall, but He is in the midst of the mist to lift us up.

For every gift of love	a sacrifice
For every expression of peace	faith
For every promise	hope
For every confession	forgiveness
For every battle	victory
For every valley	mountains

YAHSHUA, in His atonement went through every valley we must travel. He blessed us with faith, hope, forgiveness and victory. He warned us of tribulation and trials, but encouraged us with the words: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." There is no valley that we travel on that will be harder than the valley that He travelled on. "He who overcomes will stand." Will be victorious at the end of the valley. The word of God says, You (God) will guard and keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he commits himself to you. So, trust in the

Lord forever; for the Lord God is an everlasting Rock (Isaiah 26:3,4). The blessings the valley brings us are eternal; enduring forever. We do not see or experience them now; they are only for the overcomers. We read in Hebrews 10:35-36,38 the following: Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward, for you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away what is promised... The just shall live by faith; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him. Life has many valleys and mountains needed to be traveled; He who promised to be with us is faithful to fulfill that which He promised. He is our God, our deliverer; we must put our trust only in Him, for nothing is impossible to our God.