

## THE VALLEY, A PLACE FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

In the silence of a valley of suffering the mind brings circumstances we face with anxiety fear and worries. Long nights, as if there was no day around the corner, we submerge in the solicitude of our thoughts. A prayer is directed to God with questions without answers. Alone we remain in doubt, without faith to alleviate the pain, bringing hope for that moment in the valley. God's promises sound clearly, but His voice overtaken by anxiety, we cannot hear. God, where are you? I then lift up my eyes and see Him suffering my pains in a horrible cross, body covered with blood disfigured beyond recognition. Then I realized, no, I am not alone, He is suffering with me here in this valley so deep. He Said, "the reproaches and abuses of those who reproached and abused you fell on Me" (Rom.15:4). There are many patriarchs that walked the valley of life before their deaths. I think Job, a righteous man, who loved God and walked in His ways, suffered the worst valley one would do. Job, lost everything, family riches, he was left with poor friendships, who served to accuse him. Body filled with sores, still did not curse His God, even when suggested by his wife. At the end of his ordeal, Job, when facing God, repenting, said, "I had heard of You [only] by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You; therefore, I loathe [my words] and abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 5-6).

The Prophet Jonah experienced the worst and darkest valley one could ever experience. His disobedience cost him three days and three nights in the belly of a BIG FISH. It was there that he acknowledged his sin and called on the name of the Lord for salvation. Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly and said, "I cried out of my distress to the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of Sheol cried I, and You heard my voice... I went down to the bottoms and the very roots of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever. Yet, You have brought up my life from the pit and corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted upon me, I earnestly and seriously remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple" (Jonah 2). Jonah was a peculiar prophet. When he saw that the people of Nineveh repented and were saved from God's judgment, he was displeased. He prayed to the Lord and said, "I pray You, O Lord, is not this just what I said when I was still in my country? That is why I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and You revoke the [sentence of] evil against them. Therefore now, O Lord, I beseech You, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live... Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons not [yet old enough to] know their right hand from their left, and many cattle?" (Jonah 4). A prophet without a heart of compassion is cold toward people and without the love of God.

Abraham was given a son in his old age, a special son, the son of the promise, from whom the nation of Israel was to be born. Abraham was not just a mediocre man. God considered him, His friend. But he had to pass through a valley where he had to be tested in order for God to fulfill His plan through him. A very difficult thing God requested from him, indeed. He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love and go to the region of Moriah and offer him

there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I will tell you" (Gen. 22:2). This was very important because, it was there that God had His Son sacrificed many years later. Abraham was picturing what was to come. By faith, he obeyed, in spite of sorrow, but by faith also he knew that God would raise his son to fulfill His promise through him. The Lord rewarded Abraham by saying, "I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, that since you have done this and have not withheld or begrudged your son, your only son, in blessing, I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore. And your Seed (YAHSHUA) possess the gate of His enemies; and in your SEED (YAHSHUA) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed and [by Him] bless themselves, because you have heard and obeyed My voice" (Gen 22). The Patriarch Abraham was acknowledged in the hall of heroes in Hebrews 11.

We do not realize God's plans for us when He allows us to pass through the fire of the valleys and deserts, a necessary thing in our pilgrimage to accomplish His will. Many times, we just rebel and go our way. As a result, our life becomes unfulfilled and void of peace. In eternity, what will be the words we will hear from Him? Psalm 139 has a beautiful picture of how we were personally created. "My frame was not hidden from You (God) when I was made in secret; and skillfully wrought [intricately as if embroidered with various colors] in the depths of the earth; Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days [of my life] were written before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them" (15-16).

When the Prophet Jeremiah was going through the valley, God spoke to him saying, "Call unto me and I will answer you; I will tell you mighty things that you do not know" (33:3). To Israel in their desert in Babylonia, God promised them, "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 seek Me, and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:11-13). It is in the valley that our heart is contrite and willing to seek God and listen to Him. So, the valley of life is necessary to clean our soul, as the rain is for the earth. Water speaks of the Holy Spirit and His ministry of cleaning us by molding us to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. The valley and desert are the best places for God to get our attention. The pain it inflicts on the body and soul causes the head to weep, helping to alleviate the weight we carry. However, comfort is always present in those hours. A valley was given to every believer in their pilgrimage, when YAHSHUA said, "In the world you will have tribulation and trails and distress and frustration; but be of good courage! For I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Sarah's maid and her son were sent away from the house for Israel's behavior. They were sent out without much provision to live in the desert. Hagar, in her despair, cried to God. When the water in the bottle was all gone, Hagar caused the youth to lie down under one of the shrubs; she sat opposite him, he lifted up his vice and wept and she raised her voice and wept; God heard the voice of the youth, and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the youth where he is. Arise, raise up the youth and support him with your hand, for I intend to make him a great nation. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the

bottle with water and caused the youth to drink” (Gen.21:15-20). On a previous occasion when God spoke to her, she gave this name to the Lord: “You are the God Who sees me” (Gen.16:13). The valleys are not places to run away from God; it is rather to get near Him. As a good Shepherd, He is always with us. All our pains He took upon Himself on the cross. For it is written, “The reproaches and abuses of those who reproached and abused you fell on Me.” (Ps.69:9)

Where are you today, my friend? On the top of a mountain, in a valley, or in a desert? Remember the same God of the mountain is the same God of the valley and desert. The same Who said, I will never leave nor forsake you; fear not, for I go before you; nothing will harm you. Perhaps your faith is weak to digest all these promises in your hour of doubt. But it is not about you, but about God and His words. Believe His Words!

Psalm 34: 6-8, 15, 17-19 (Amplified Bible)

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him [who revere and worship Him with awe] and each of them He delivers. O taste and see that the Lord [our God] is good! Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man who trusts and takes refuge in Him.

The eyes of the Lord are toward the [uncompromisingly] righteous and His ears are open to their cry.

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their distress and troubles. The Lord is close to those who are of a broken heart and saves such as are crushed with sorrow for sin and are humbly and thoroughly penitent. Many evils confront the [consistently] righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.