

*"Leaves" From a Disciple's
Journal . . .*

The
Blessed
Life
in . . .



The
Valley
of
Weeping



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by
Wm. Gene Scott, Ph.D.

Unnamed Heroes



The Apostle Paul makes this very brief reference in the New Testament: "They" let me down in a basket.

No names. No identification. No elaborate flattery. Just a simple reference: They let me down in a basket.

Unnamed heroes are the subject of this statement. "They" were the ones who provided ropes, basket, and risked their lives to let Paul down over the wall at Damascus thereby saving his life and perpetuating his ministry. Not a very glamorous deed; but without this action, Paul would not have gone forward from Damascus. There would have been no second, third, or other missionary journey, no writing of two-thirds of the New Testament, no Hymn of Christian Love in First Corinthians 13, no Eulogy of Christian Resurrection Hope in First Corinthians 15. In short, without these unnamed heroes, the Apostle Paul's great ministry would not have continued.

We believe that these "rope fellows" will share in all that Paul did. We further believe that their being unnamed only increases their "eternal" reward because no portion of that reward has been advanced through credit in "time."

Several people provided the funds to publish the first edition of this book. They are left "unnamed." Like the "unnamed heroes" referenced above, we believe that they shall share in all the good that may be accomplished through the publication of this book. We acknowledge our debt to them by this statement and wait with them for eternity to reveal the influence this book will have on those who read it.

... w. euGene Scott

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The picture below was taken by the author from a place high on rugged Mount Gilboa in modern Israel. The rocky trail, through a valley, to another unclear and distant valley beyond, seemed to symbolize the path called "the Valley of Weeping" which is the subject of this book.



"Leaves" on rugged Mt. Gilboa, in North Central Israel, as viewed from a rocky path through rugged valleys.

INTRODUCTION

A "disciple" is a learner; but he is a particular kind of learner. All men are learners, but not all men are disciples.

A "disciple" is a **disciplined** learner. Man cannot choose to learn or not to learn; man "lives and learns" and in that sense all men are learners. Man can choose **what** to learn; **where** to learn; **how** he learns; **in that sense** men become disciples. A disciple has made a choice and focused his learning. Not all men are that kind of learners.

These "leaves" are from the preaching ministry of one who has disciplined himself to know God through His "Word." They were first presented as messages from public platforms, then transcribed and edited for publication. The message of this book was preached at a special ordination service for ministers at Melodyland Christian Center in Anaheim, California. At times this unique focus appears in the message. But since all who accept the Lordship of Christ are in some way **His** ministers we leave the sermon intact.

The messages in this series are designed to take the truths of the Bible and apply them to practical problems of everyday living. The author has oft noted that he believes the essence of meaning in the incarnation is that God moved into a "tent" of human flesh and revealed Himself in life that is real and ordinary — walking dusty roads, associating with ordinary men, eating ordinary food, encountering man in the stuff of "non mystical" everyday action. God's Word should still provide **that kind** of encounter.

The writer's life has therefore been committed not only to learning God's Word, but to communicating that Word as a compass point from which men in every kind of circumstance can take a true bearing.

As these "leaves" fall on your pathway, we pray that you will pause long enough to take a new "fix" on the truths they carry.



The author stands in the Valley of Jezreel in Northeastern Israel. This valley, so many times in scripture, was a place where God's people underwent the experience of "weeping," but God was always there to deliver.

complete a Ph.D. in Philosophies of Education at Stanford University. At Stanford his Doctoral Dissertation dealt with the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and he did specialized studies in comparative religions and far eastern religious philosophies.

His life has many chapters. He serves as pastor at Faith Center in Glendale, California and as President of Faith Broadcasting Network which owns TV channels 30 in Los Angeles, 38 in San Francisco, 18 in Hartford, Conn. and KHOF-FM radio in Los Angeles. He has served as educational consultant to Foreign Missions Boards on assignments taking him to schools on every continent. As a businessman he acts as President for five different corporations and in this grueling activity has been forced to make his Bible teachings apply to life where it's "at". As a convention speaker and Bible teacher his work has been worldwide. Recorded tapes of his lectures and preaching have been widely circulated by Bible Voice, Inc. of Hollywood, Wescott Christian Center, the Melodyland Christian Center of Anaheim, and the Faith Broadcasting Network.

Dr. Scott is best known presently as the speaker on the "Voice of Faith" and "Living Faith" weekly telecasts and as the host on the daily television program "Festival of Faith."

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Dr. Gene Scott is a scholar and lecturer who has made a vital impact on Christendom with his Bible teaching to groups encompassing virtually every denomination. Though raised a minister's son, he rebelled against tradition early in life and became agnostic in college. His search for a faith caused him to change majors on every degree.

A hard study of the resurrection of Christ led to a firm faith, and Dr. Scott is best known for his summation of this return to faith under the title: "A Philosopher Looks at Christ." Scott went on to com-

I. THE BIBLE RECORD

"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, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God."

— Psalms 84:5,6,7 (KJV).

II. THE PROMISE

I ask you to take a pencil and underline certain words in your Bible as we study these verses. The verses unfold a journey of the blessed man; and by underlining certain words we force a pause . . . long enough to mine from the verse a different perspective of truth with each pause. Start with the word: "**blessed.**"

I listened, as a part of the audience tonight, while some of you who are being ordained spoke of the blessing in your life and the joy attached to the ordination experience. These blessings are a part of the Christian journey that can be located **in time** and attached to a **place** or a **circumstance**. But the blessed condition being described by the word in this verse is different . . . It is not a sometime affair. Instead, **it is a state-of-being that never wavers, never changes in its quality, is completely unaffected by changing circumstances.** It is a quality of blessedness never to be altered.

III. THE FOCUS OF THE PROMISE

Such a blessing promised in these verses can be yours to have, but that blessing is not loosely distributed without qualification.

Underline the words: "**the** man." Notice that the article is **definite**, not indefinite. This definite article sets a certain kind of man apart from all others. Not just anyone has the blessing this verse is talking about. That certain unique quality which marks **the** blessed man of these verses will now begin to appear.

IV.

THE JOURNEY OF THE BLESSED

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who **passing** . . . underline "passing" as the third word. It describes a man **on a journey**.

One constantly faces the temptation of reducing the Christian life down to a destination point or a series of destinations. For example, when you come to God there must be a total commitment experience. Sin, in God's book, is described by Isaiah in these words — "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to our own way . . ."* Now, there must come a time in our life where we turn from ourselves, totally to God. This experience truly **begins** the Christian way. But **there is a danger** of making this **the** destination without unfolding what happens after that event.

In the current Charismatic renewal stream, there is the equal danger of heralding the infilling of the Holy Spirit, as yet another destination point. In some portions of the Charismatic stream there are those who wear the experience as a badge of achievement and would lend the impression they have completely arrived.

In the New Testament the infilling of the Holy

*Isaiah 53:6.

Spirit was a beginning point, a new dimension of relationship with the same person that came into ones heart in salvation. Yet, some would reduce the experience to a destination point and climb to that mountain of experience, then rest, and wave others to the point, instead of unfolding what is to follow in the Christian journey.

We treat other experiences like this also, until the Christian journey is viewed like a string of beads — places, events and circumstances that we can identify with the name of "blessing."

The more accurate description of this life, which is consistent with the whole book of God, calls the Christian life a journey. We are pilgrims here, with citizenship in Heaven, and **the Christian life is an ever-changing pathway that must encompass all dimensions of ones life.**

V.

THE WEeping OF THE BLESSED

Of that "Blessed" life, we read — "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca." Underline in your Bible: "the valley of Baca."

Baca means weeping. And this verse describes a man who is continually in the state of blessing; no qualities of the blessing will change, even though he is going through a valley of weeping.

About the last decade and a half, there has come slipping into the church world the suggestion that: "When you are in God's perfect will everything in your circumstance will be good and is going to get better for you." This has caused many to believe that when things go wrong in their life, as they try to serve God, the bad circumstances are a sign that they are "out of God's will." They not only suffer the circumstances that we can describe as a "valley of weeping," but added to that is the devastating thought that this is all happening to them because they somehow departed from God's will.

This verse in Psalms 84 says that the blessed man, on his journey, while still in the state of being blessed, is going through a valley of weeping. And the fact that you are ordained for God's ministry will probably qual-

ify you for more valleys of weeping than any other pathway you could walk; because . . . the fact that the life is totally committed to God can never be a guarantee that your journey will not lead you through valleys of weeping.

I have counseled many these last several years who have circumstances falling in upon them enough to crush a man in the natural. They will open themselves in the counseling time and say something like this (which I will quote from a particular individual in this case): "I don't really care," he said to me, "What God takes away from me, because He gave me everything I have anyway; but that which concerns me is to know where I erred to cause this to come upon me?"

I said to him, "Friend, if circumstances going wrong in a life indicate that a man is out of God's will, then every saint in God's book must have spent most of his life out of God's will."

Take the life of Joseph. It will illustrate the point. From the day the vision came in his youth until he sat on the throne in Egypt, (thereby fulfilling promises given by God), 17 years elapsed.

I've sat down to think on occasions in my study and calculated: What if . . . when Joseph went to take the news in that Old Testament story to his brethren, what if the one brother . . . who allowed his life to be spared and caused him to be cast into a dungeon rather than being slain . . . what if that brother had left one hour earlier? Instead, he left shortly after Joseph was cast into the dungeon!

What if Joseph had arrived late enough that the brother had been gone? And what if the brother had come back when they were selling him to that slave train which carried him off to Egypt? The camel train was traveling south and west — what if the sympathetic brother Reuben had come just before it arrived or if the slave traders had been going north instead of south and west?

What if Joseph had been sold to someone other than Potiphar, whose wife rewarded his integrity and pure moral character with an accusation that caused him to be thrown into prison? And what if those representatives of Pharaoh's house had not been there in prison having dreams at the exact time Joseph was there?

It's a familiar story but when you add up the statistical probability of all these happenings, you come to the conclusion that it was not a series of chance events. The book of Psalms says that God Himself, "sent a man to Egypt." God was in it all — the chains, the beatings, the imprisonment — all of it was God's pathway for Joseph.

I've noticed a tendency about myself, and I think others have it also. We tend to forget that these Biblical persons are made of the same flesh and blood as you and I. And there is a tendency to think that for these "supermen," as we're prone to think of them, the dungeon just wasn't as dark, it wasn't quite as cold, and loneliness wasn't as keenly felt, the whip didn't hurt as much, the doubts didn't come into their mind

like they come into yours and mine.

Don't you ever believe it! They had the same weakness of flesh that you and I have; but they had a determination and a faith and an ability to hang onto the promises of God. They would not allow themselves to believe at any length of time, that God had departed from them because the valley of weeping was a part of the journey.

I read the life of Paul periodically. The great modern leader Ghandi is reported to have once said, "If I could ever meet a true Christian, I'd be one." The proper answer to that is that he ought to have taken a good look at Paul. If God ever had a testimonial credential, Paul was that credential. Yet, look at the valleys in his life!

Paul set out to do the will of God on one occasion. With his followers behind him, he began a journey to preach the word of God in Asia. God suddenly stopped him. As you read the account in the book of Acts where God stopped him, you won't find any place where God tells him an alternate place to go. God just said no. Paul's words are, "... They ... were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." (Acts 16:6.)

You may confront this in your life. When you begin the ministry you are probably willing to do **anything** for God; but before you're really useful for God, you must also be willing to do **nothing** for God. And if He drops the reins and says stop, even though He doesn't tell you where else to go, you stop!

Now, I am sure that Paul faced psychological pressures like those that you and I face. What is he going to tell the people that supported him (or possibly gave the money) for the trip to Asia? I am sure that Paul told them he was going to preach the word of God in Asia. Yet, we don't find him complaining about it when God's orders blocked his path.

Instead of bitterness of spirit, he turns and goes down to Troas. There in the night, when he could be gloomy and moaning about the frustration of his plans, crying about where he can go to serve God, an angel comes and says to him: "Come over to Macedonia." When that happened, if I had been Paul, I would then say, "Now I **know** that I am in God's will; an angel told me where to go!"

First stopping place after landing on the coast of Macedonia is Phillippi. First thing that happens to him, or at the best, shortly after his arrival, he's beaten and thrown in prison.

Sitting there in jail, Paul is not crying and saying "God, why didn't you leave me alone and let me go to Bithynia where I started." Instead, as I heard one man say, he's nudging his fellow prisoner saying: "Let's sing!" He doesn't sing "The Jailhouse Blues!" He sings a song of joy and praise at midnight.

God delivers him out of prison and he goes to Thessalonica. Opposition gathers there. Sympathizers spirit him away with some of his friends and he goes down to Athens. At Athens he preaches to the philosophers on Mars Hill, and then walks, via a narrow

peninsula, all the distance to Corinth. In Corinth, he is put before the judicial officials of that city and judged again.

His life included constant stonings and imprisonment, many shipwrecks, and much peril. He catalogs all this in the Corinthian letter, when he says:

"Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters . . . robbers . . . mine own country men . . . heathen . . . the city . . . the wilderness . . . the sea . . . false brethren . . ." (II Cor. 10:25-27.)

Peril after peril, he names, one after another. His record is one of valley, after valley, after valley, after valley.

Don't think therefore, that full dedication to God makes you some kind of favorite of God who will constantly escape such things as valleys of weeping. **Blessed men on their journey, while being blessed, go through valleys of weeping.** That's part of God's will.

VI.

THE ENDURANCE OF THE BLESSED

Keep reading on in Psalms 84: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; . . . who . . . passing **through** the valley of Baca." Underline the word "**through.**"

When the valley of weeping comes upon us, we sometimes want to quit and we want to cry, or want to find sympathy. Next time remember the marching orders that come to us from these verses: **blessed men go THROUGH their valleys.** Blessed men don't camp in them. Valleys will be a part of our journey and they will **always** be a part of our journey — clear to the end of this life.

Remember this, the cross came **at the end** of Jesus' ministry. I have said to my father, who is now 67, "You don't retire. The cross came at the end of Jesus' ministry and was the last expression of His earthly life."* But this cross was also the prelude for the resurrection. It is also true, as one has said, if you really serve God and follow Him, you may have to die a failure in men's eyes and wait for the resurrection to vindicate you like Jesus did . . . and that's a long wait for some of us. But the cross **is** part of that journey and when you confront it again and again, you'll want to

*See "Four Mountains in a Troubled Land," by Dr. Scott, obtainable from this publisher.

give up. At that point, remember — blessed men **go through** their valleys.

Sympathy will kill you. Don't be the kind of preacher (or Christian) that your congregation (or others) must always have to minister to you. Find the source of strength in God that we're leading to in this verse until no matter how deep or wide or dark the valley, you'll remember that blessed men **go through.**

Now, the trick of the enemy in your life will be to get you feeling sorry for yourself. When a valley falls in upon you, the temptation is to start saying to yourself first and then to others — well, what have I done to deserve this.

Whether you can find an answer or not, it is irrelevant. Regardless of the cause, once in the valley, don't let yourself build a tent in the valley, and camp **there** until it becomes a place of permanence, until it becomes a place of bitterness, because you wait for sympathy or understanding.

You won't be the first Christian to **innocently** suffer in this life. Follow Paul again in Acts 21. He sets out to follow the will of God, to go to Rome via Jerusalem. He stops at the house of Phillip and a prophet named Agabus binds him with cords and begins to prophesy over him. The prophecy says that if he goes to Jerusalem, a similar "binding" will happen to him. The Christians present simply cannot associate such a circumstance with the will of God. They begin to weep and prevail upon Paul not to go. He says, "What mean you to weep and to break mine heart? I am ready not

to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:13.)

He goes to Jerusalem and they bind him as prophesied. He barely escapes with his life, sets out for Rome and, in route to Rome, in the will of God, he suffers shipwreck. He barely escapes from the shipwreck, tries to warm himself (a legitimate act) on the shores of the island, and as he gathers sticks, a snake bites him!

Wow! By the theology of some he would have to be out of God’s will because too much is going wrong in his life. Nevertheless, Paul is in the center of God’s will. Shipwreck, snake bite, and eventually a chopping block did not deter Paul on his journey. That man went on, no matter how deep the valley.

Blessed men go through. And when everything starts falling heavily upon you and you feel like crying — go to your closet and only tell the Lord about it, then march on out to the battle and recognize blessed men **go through**.

God doesn’t waste one word in this passage, saying anything about what causes the valley. Whether you’re innocent or guilty, blessed men go through the valley.

Sure, you’ll make mistakes in your ministry, and in your Christian life. I often say, about the muscles that Moses used to whip the Egyptian and kill him contrary to God’s will (trying to deliver the Israelites in his own strength), those same muscles propelled him up the hill to talk to God and receive the laws of God. You don’t cut off your hands and feet to be spiritual. God will use

you as you are, but there will always be a taming and a training process until you learn to cooperate with God and let the Lord be the Lord, not only of the harvest, but of your part in that harvest.

Sure, you’ll make mistakes, but then following a mistake, a valley will press in on you and here will come the enemy of the soul. He sympathized in the other case, when we were an innocent victim. Now he’ll accuse! The accusations will sound like this: “There’s no hope for you, and God can’t do anything with you anyway!”

Don’t you believe it. Commit the mistake to the cross and say, “My hope is in Jesus and the power of the spirit in my life is there, and he is willing to come by grace and dwell in me as in an ‘old crock of clay’ ” (as the New Testament in one translation puts it). Think of it: “We have this treasure in a crock of clay.” (II Cor. 4:7.) Repent of what you’ve done when you make a mistake, and recognize that **even if you are to blame**, blessed men go **through** their valley — that’s God’s promise!

No matter how long the valley **seems**, you still can go **through**. There is not one word in God’s book about how wide the valley will be, just **the certainty that blessed men go through**.

VII.

THE "FALL-OUT" FROM THE BLESSED

Blessed men go through valleys, but they do something else, too. Don't expect God to put you on display and give you a medal, just because you lasted it out. The path of the "blessed" is not simply an endurance race. Read the verses in Psalms 84 again: "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 — that is the valley itself — **make IT a well.**"

Underline those last four words. A literal translation reads: "They make it to become a place of springs." Blessed men, instead of being conquered by their valleys, **transform the valley** itself into a place of springs that can refresh others!

The best illustration I can use for this, is personal experience. I have had the opportunity to go to the place where Paul's ministry was terminated every year for the last three years.

Those who travel much know that there are lots of places identified by tradition that don't ring true. But there is something authentic about that old hewn-out rock cistern, down below the ground, across the street from the ruins of the old Roman forum and the senate building called **Mamertinum** in Rome. There is some-

thing about that underground hole which tradition identifies as the place of Paul's last imprisonment that rings true to me.

I walked down into that place a few months ago. I stood there in the light, which was pretty dim, but a lot brighter than when he was there.

In that prison, about 1900 years ago, was a man who had done nothing but serve God all of his life.* From the moment that the light shined to him on the Damascus road, he had been faithful — in beatings, imprisonment, in stripes, in weariness and fastings often.

Now his reward at the end of his life is a prison cell under the ground. I am sure that he could hear the chariot wheels outside and running free; and he knew all about the Roman senate building. He had undergone imprisonment in Caesar's palace, so he knew all about the grandeur of those buildings on the hill above the Forum. All of that was now in ruins.

While I stood in that hole in a rock, I read the letter that Paul wrote to another young preacher. He wrote II Timothy while in that prison. And I wept as I read it. And I said, "God, will you help Gene Scott to be even a little bit, while he lives, the kind of testimony or 'producer of springs in my valleys' that can bring strength to others — a strength like that which this man can still speak forth to us from his dark prison cell, though it all happened back there over 1900

*See "A Hole in Rome," by Dr. Scott, available from this publisher.

years ago." Because of the way he bore up under the valley, as one of God's blessed ones, Paul's letter from that cell has been a never ending spring of blessing to others in their valleys.

Read his words: "Paul, an apostle" (literally "sent one"—he figured God had sent him there). "... by the will of God..." Then, his testimony to Timothy: "... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. I have fought a good fight ... I have kept the faith! Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..." (II Tim. 1:1,12; 4:7,8.)

He offered this crown to me and to you too. That is what I think the verse in Psalms 84 means about "turning the valley into a place of springs." Guides in modern Rome can't tell you the names for many of the senators that used to walk those Senate building steps across the way from Paul's prison in that city; but the sun never sets on the words that Paul penned from that prison cell and they continue to bring encouragement to other Christians in their valleys.

VIII.

THE "ADDED" BLESSING OF THE BLESSED

Blessed Men transform their valleys. They turn it into a place of springs. How can that be? What is their secret?

I used to think the next line gave the clue because I am the son of a revival movement preacher. The next line says that the "rain also filleth the pools," but that is a terrible translation. The King James translation lends the suggestion that **rain comes and fills the pools.** The literal should read: "The rain **covereth the pools.**" **The blessed man already has water in his valleys. He has already turned it into a place of springs,** and the rain, when it comes, is just icing on the cake.

Let me charge you as Christians to watch out that you don't become a "spiritual rain-watcher." For too many years, I thought the blessing was in the rain when it comes. We speak in a figurative language, but I think many of you will know exactly what we're talking about in the figure of "rain." It is that sovereign working of God, whether in a valley or out of a valley, at which time He sends "the rain of His Presence" in a sovereign working of grace.

That refreshing "rain" is enough to lift us out of any circumstance. Because it is so wonderful, the temptation is upon all Christians and upon those who are

His ministers to start **counting on the rain** for deliverance. We will be tempted to interpret this verse as I used to interpret it . . . blessed men go through valleys, but there will be a cloud of blessing on the horizon which will eventually drop the rain of deliverance.

True, that happens sometimes. God lifted Paul into a third heaven; and some scholars think that was at the time he was under a stone heap near death from stoning.

And I read of the apostle John; he wanted the chief seat in the kingdom and was told to drink of the cup that Jesus was to drink of. After a lifetime of drinking it, he was banished to an island alone, with not even Christian fellowship, much less material prosperity. But God did give to him a cloudburst of deliverance by showing him the redeemed of all ages, he saw a new heaven and a new earth, with God wiping all tears away from ones eyes; no death, no pain, all things, by God to be made over new.*

That is what I think Psalms 84 means by the rain. It will happen; It has happened. There are many who have been in a valley where the Holy Spirit, in a sovereign way, has delivered through that which could be called a divine cloudburst of supernatural help.

It has certainly happened to me. In 1936, my Dad was dying of rheumatic fever. In the early stages of the disease, he was crippled from the waist down. In the same year, my brother and sister were born. They

*Revelations 21.

were twins and only stayed with us long enough for us to fall in love with them. Then both, one after the other, were taken death. We were destitute and my mother was quite ill.

I remember the day we laid my brother beside my sister. We stood out at the County graveyard . . . my Dad was held up by two of my uncles (for he was in pain and too weak to carry himself) to watch the burial . . . I can remember, as a boy, going home and sitting in the living room. My mother was hysterical with grief.

I watched her go into the bedroom and I heard her sobbing. Then after a while it got quiet. In a few moments she came out. Though I was a boy, I still remember the transformation. She was radiating joy, for God had given her a "cloudburst of blessing" which transformed that circumstance of sorrow. He gave her a vision and planted words in her heart that He had given her "some flowers to bud on earth and to bloom in heaven."

I've had more than one experience like that so I don't want to diminish the value of "the rain." At another time I was in a hotel in Taipei, Formosa. I was sick. If God had not performed a miracle to deliver, I don't think I would have made it!

Because of such blessed events, I became a "counter-upon-the-rain" for deliverance. I became like many who, when pressures come, agonizingly cry out for deliverance and wait for a cloud to appear on the horizon that will pass by and drop "the rain." Then, and only

then, they think that all will be rosy again. Sadly true, even if the rain went by, when it stopped falling any more, we might be just as bad off as when it started raining.

The rain is not the guaranteed blessing in Psalms 84 and I belabor the point because I don't want to be misunderstood. Praise God for rain **when it comes**. Be glad for that marvelous outpouring of His spirit under God's sovereign control. However, if you become a **counter-upon-the-rain** for your deliverance, you will never be **the blessed man of this verse**.

I repeat, in Psalms 84, the rain is not the guaranteed blessing. Rain is just (colloquially said) icing on the cake. For the blessed man has already changed his valley, he already has water, he has turned his valley into springs. The rain just "covers the pools." It is "added" blessing, when it comes.

IX.

THE TRUE STRENGTH OF THE BLESSED

Where is the source of blessing? Here it is in a word: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in **thee**." Circle the word "**thee**."

God has never promised that we will not have valleys to walk through. Indeed, His word indicates you certainly **will** have valleys. **But He has said**, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5.)

Many times, when the valley presses in, you're going to be crying for deliverance. Remember this — **stop crying for deliverance**. Recognize the presence of **the deliverer . . .** take His hand, and let Him lead you on. The promise is, **I'll never leave you nor forsake you!**

Gene Scott had to enter valleys into which no rain came to understand this. One of my valleys was so long I thought I'd never get out, yet week after week I preached these truths. While the congregations listened, I preached — more to Gene Scott than to anyone else — **Blessed is the man who passes through the valley and makes it a place of springs**. And I believed that God would **not limit the blessing** to those that go through **unless He intended you could go through**. Yet without consciously intending it, suddenly I would be looking for a cloudburst and was identifying my expectancy of deliverance with some changing circumstance

that would happen.

Finally the light began to dawn as I went back to God's word in Psalms 84. The blessed condition relates to **God Himself**, not to my earthly circumstance. The reason the blessing doesn't change is because God doesn't change. He is with you, no matter where you are — in the valley or out.

Jesus ordained 12 disciples. Mark said that He ordained them that they might be **"with Him."** (Mark 3:14.) And in John 14, when He was about to leave, He said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter . . ." (Verse 16). In John 17 He prays as promised. Among other things, He says to the Father:

"While I was **with** them . . . I kept them . . ." It wasn't their performance that **kept** them; they were going to fail shortly after that. "While I was **with** them . . . I kept them." "I am no more in the world. I come to thee." (Verse 11.) Now what will happen? **Father, you keep them. Make them one as you and I are one. I in them, they in me.*** He prays what He said He would pray in John 14. That's the source of blessing and that's the root meaning of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. A personal experience of the presence of God.

The Psalmist said, "In **thy presence** is fullness of joy"—not in circumstance, in **thy presence** is fullness of joy.** To the Ephesians Paul then said, when you

*cf. John 17:11—23,26.

**Psalms 16:11.

have the spirit you have the "earnest" of your inheritance.* In the Greek that word "earnest" means **"part payment of that which shall be full, identical in nature to the full payment when it comes."** Now that's our inheritance — His presence! In the spirit we have **that.**

To illustrate this truth, I often imitate a father who raises a family. I can get a bundle of blankets, a bottle of milk, a record of a baby crying, a warmer. I can warm the bottle, roll up the bundle of blankets, carry the bundle, grab the bottle and listen to baby cries on a record all night. I go to work equally exhausted as any real father. Do you know what happens after seven days of that experience? I don't ever want to see a child in my home again. I turn myself against having a family . . . by walking the floor, carrying the bundle, losing sleep, listening to the record of a baby crying.

The difference between me and the father is clear: the father has **the bundle of life** in his arms. If he could give up the pain without giving up the life, he'd probably like to do it. **But if in order to get rid of the pain** of the association, **he must give up the life** that's brought joy to his home, he'll walk the floor until he drops.

For too many years, as a preacher's kid, I carried the bundles of religious performance and never came to a knowing, living relationship with Jesus Christ as a person. Yet I only have to read the book of Acts to

*Ephesians 1:14.

know that their is something **more** to this Christian experience. Those New Testament disciples are beaten, as I've said, thrown in prison, and suffer terribly; but a thread weaves its way through every chapter in the story. They have a conscious awareness of a person with them that means more to them than life itself. That's their source of strength. That is the promised "comforter" Jesus prayed for and promised. That is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in **thee**."

Now when my valleys come I don't go out somewhere on a mountain, look and wait for a cloud of rain to come. I just simply say what the Psalmist said — Lord, thou knowest my downsittings as well as mine uprisings. Thou understandest! (Cf. Psalms 139.)

Expect that others may not understand a minister of the Lord. Read about Elijah's life. When he came to her house and provided miracle provision, the widow thought he was a saint and the greatest thing that had happened to her (I Kings 17). But when her son died, she thought Elijah was the worst thing that happened, blaming him for her son's death. And when he raised her son from the dead, she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God . . . and you tell the truth."

That's the way human judgment changes and you'll never get the congregation or anyone else to always understand God's call on your life. It doesn't matter, if you believe the Psalmist: "Oh Lord, **thou** understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path." He can hold the world in His hand, yet delicately com-

passes **your path and your lying down**. "He is acquainted" with all your ways. If you "take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall His hand lead you." His "right hand" shall hold you. When the darkness hovers in, say what the Psalmist said — "If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me."*

Read Isaiah in your time of weeping, or in your valley: "Thus saith God the Lord . . . He that created the Heavens, and stretched them out . . ." (now that's broad enough for any valley you'll walk through) "He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord . . . will hold thine hand . . . When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned . . .** Why? He is with you!

I thought my valleys were over; but not long ago I discovered that one valley was just a doorway to another one. And as ministers of Christ, whom He sends forth to preach, remember this — Blessed is the man whose strength is in **thee**. Such men face their valleys, go through them, they turn them into places of springs, and they go from strength to strength.

*All from Psalms 139.

**Isaiah 42:5,6; 43:2.

Why? And how? F. B. Myers once said that you have never really tapped the infinite grace and unending resources of God **until you get beyond your own inadequate strength and limited resources.**

Next time, when that valley presses you beyond measure, and you give up in your own strength, start tapping His strength, and you will discover a new source of strength you never would have found otherwise. Then you will know why the Psalmist says of these in Verse 7:

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

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