

A “HIGHER LEVEL” OF LIVING

(Psalm 84:1-12)



TO D-RUT YOUR LIFE

- ◆ Discern The Season
- ◆ Receive Strength From Above
- ◆ Take One Day At A Time

“As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs or a well.” (v. 6)

Bill Kirk

“A HIGHER LEVEL OF LIVING”

Text: Psalm 84:1-12

Subject: A Higher Level of Living!

Introduction

- ◆ Psalm 84 is the diary of a valley walker.
- ◆ The writer is traveling on a journey.

Question: Where is the psalmist going?

Answer: He is going to Jerusalem.

Question: Why Jerusalem?

Answer: Because he misses the Tabernacle (or Sanctuary) on Mount Zion.

In v. 1, he remembers the awesome presence of God.

In v. 2, he longs to be in the house of God.

In v. 3, he pictures meeting God at an altar of prayer.

In v. 4, he misses the song services when God was praised and exalted.

(But in v. 5 he makes an announcement.)

“Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”

In other words

- We are all on a pilgrimage (or a journey).
- On a journey, we all have two choices:
 1. **Look back** or **look ahead!**
 2. **Retreat** or **move forward!**
 3. **Hide out** or **step out!**

Illustration

In Niagara Falls a board member (Edgar Walck) gave a devotion one night and said these words:
“If we stand still we will lose sight of God; for God is always moving forward.”

Question: How many of you want to move forward?

Question: How many of you want to keep growing?

Question: How many of you want to make progress?

Question: How many of you want to “**enjoy the journey**” and not get stuck in a rut?

The dictionary defines a rut in two ways:

1. A sunken track or groove made by the passage of vehicles and,
2. A fixed or usually boring routine.
 - Psalm 84 is God’s way to d-rut us!
 - Its God’s way to complete the journey with joy!
 - Its wisdom to protect us from anger, depression & anxiety!

Why so important?

- Because over time your heart can change and get grooves in it from being driven over!
- Over time your heart can get bored because of unfulfilled expectations!

- Over time your heart can fall into the routine of same old, same old – and lose the fire and passion it once experienced!

Psalm 84

IS GOD'S WAY TO D-RUT THE HEART
(And take us all to a higher level of living)

Question: What's the word of the Lord to your heart from Psalm 84?

Question: How does the Lord protect us from cynicism and sarcasm in life and ministry?

Question: How do you survive (and make progress) through every experience in your journey?

(Here is God's way)

I. Discern the Season You Are In:

(v. 6) *"Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well."*

Question: What is the psalmist saying here?

Answer: He is expressing the tension in his heart:

- On one hand he remembers how life used to be.
- On the other hand he anticipates the joy when he reaches the temple courts (in the future)
- But right now he finds himself in a valley named Baca.
- The word "Baca" means "hardship or weeping".

Question: What is the "Valley of Baca"?

Answer: It is a depressed place that you want to climb out of on your way to Mount Zion.

Question: Why does God address the valley?

Answer: Because valleys enhance our longing to be somewhere else!

- Valleys make you want to "hurry up" and get out of where you are.

In other words

- I see where I've been (**in the past**)
- I'm looking forward to where God is taking me (**in the future**)
- But I need to discern something **in the present** (to keep me out of the rut mentally and emotionally)

Question: What is it that protects me from despair, anger and anxiety?

Answer: Two words: "**passing through**"

Question: Why are the words "**passing through**" so important?

Answer: The Valley of Baca is mentioned in Judges 2:1-5.

- It received its name from the weeping of the Jews.
- The Jews had been rebuked by the Lord for their disobedience (and had regrets for their rebellion).
- This took place in Bochim and Judges 2:4 records: "***The people lifted up their voices and wept.***"

In other words:

(The Psalmist understands something that God wants you to understand.)

1. You will **pass through** the season of regret.
2. You will **pass through** the barren places.

3. You will **pass through** the season of:

- ◆ “If only I would have”
- ◆ “I wish I could start over again and go back.”
- ◆ “Have I messed up my future?”
- ◆ “I wish I wouldn’t have done that”
- ◆ “I can’t undo the past”; “Will I ever change?”
- ◆ “Can God get me where I need to be?”

Question: What is God saying here?

1. You won’t always be in a dry and barren place!
2. It’s not the last chapter of the book yet!
3. Where you are is not where you’re going to stay!
4. There is life beyond your regrets!
5. “Great seasons” are in front of you so don’t lose perspective!!!

In Psalm 84

- The Psalmist is refreshed in spirit by anticipating when the valley will be behind him.
- He teaches us all that good things lie ahead.
- He knows you are tempted in the valley of Baca to make it a place of bitterness, despair, unforgiveness, resentment and anger.
- But it’s only temporary – you’re passing through, not staying put!!!

II. Resist the Temptation to Awfulize!

Question: What does it mean to awfulize?

Answer: It means to add up all the reasons...

- Why it is such a bad day!
- Why you can’t seem to lose weight!
- Why there isn’t enough money to go around!
- Why other people don’t make you happy!
- Why taxes are so high!
- Why you feel so bad!
- Why you hate to wait in traffic!
- Why you’re not married yet!
- Why you don’t like getting old!
- Why you don’t like going to school!
- Why other people get on your nerves and tick you off!

Question: What causes people to awfulize?

Answer: We listen to the wrong voices!!!

Question: What does God have to say about it?

Answer: Psalm 84:5 - ***“Blessed are those whose strength is in you.”***

Question: What’s the secret to living above the “awfulizing” trap?

Answer: Understanding that your strength is being developed by the very things you awfulize about!!!

In other words,

- Your trials become barbells and bench presses of your soul.
- Instead of awfulize, murmur and complain, you get stronger, and stronger and stronger.

So much so in verse 7:

“You go from strength to strength.” (Which means):

- Believers are continually acquiring fresh strength for the journey forward

It means:

- What would weary and fatigue you is replaced by strength from above,
- And strength from above invigorates the soul and keeps you climbing upward,
- And climbing upward carries its own reward of growth, progress and stamina!
 - “But you don’t know where I’ve been.”
 - “You don’t know how I feel.”
 - “You don’t know my weaknesses.”
 - “How can I be sure that what the enemy meant for evil – God will turn to good?”

(v. 7) *“They go from strength to strength and **every one of them**, (how many?) **every one of them** in Zion appeareth before God.”*

Question: How many of the travelers did God strengthen to complete the journey?

Question: How many of the walkers to Jerusalem made it because they received strength from above?

(v. 7) “Every one of them.”

- ◆ That means you are included!
- ◆ That means your name is in v. 7!
- ◆ That means the devil is a liar and you do not have to drop out, quit, go backwards, go in reverse or be a casualty!!!

III. **Understand That God is in the Middle of Your Problems—Because He is!**

(v. 6) *“As they pass through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs or a well.”*

Question: What is the Psalmist telling us here?

Answer: That he’s looking for the good so the trial becomes a blessing!

In other words,

- The pilgrim traveler will see the Lord **make an oasis** in his personal desert.

Question: How do you know (and how can you be sure) that the valley doesn’t swallow you up?

Answer: (v. 6) *“**Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools.**”*

Question: How does your valley become a blessing?

Question: How do you go through it (instead of sink while you’re in it?) (v. 6)

1. Passing through the valley **you make a well.**
2. The rain fills the pools **where you are.**

Question: What does it mean to **make a well** while you are in the valley?

Question: And, what does it mean to have rain fill the empty pools?

- This is God’s guarantee that the valley of trial becomes a blessing.
- This is God’s promise to do something where he finds you. **(In other words)**

1. God's plan is to provide you with **refreshment**, even in the dreariest part of the road.
2. God's plan is to provide you **water** in the place you weep.
3. God's plan is to provide you **rain** where you shed tears.
4. God's plan is to provide hidden **springs of water** as you dig deeper in prayer.
5. God's plan is to provide **grace** that is sufficient to enable you to overcome every lie of discouragement.

In other words,

- Where you are tempted to get bitter, sour, resentful or angry...
- God pours out grace as we humble ourselves and He turns our curse into a blessing.

In v. 6, "The rain fills the pools" means:

- Where there are no natural supplies from **below**, we can find abundant water from **above**.

Question: Why so important?

Answer: Because this takes the worry and anxiousness out of living because:

- You know that God's resources will always be equal to your valley of Baca.

In other words

- God makes the Valley of Baca a **blessing** instead of a **curse**. How?
- Because God is **in the middle** of your seasons and **supplies what is necessary!!!**

IV. Take One Day at a Time!

(v. 10) *"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere."*

Question: What is the danger that faces everyone on the journey of life?

Answer: To look too far ahead down the road at things outside of your control.

Question: Why is this bad idea?

Answer: Because looking too far ahead **produces anxiety!**

Question: What does verse 10 mean, "that being a doorkeeper for God is better than anything in life outside of God?"

Answer: It means only God can give a spirit of **contentment** – that removes all envy, jealousy, comparison and unrest!

Charles Spurgeon said:

"The most favorable circumstances in earthly pleasures cannot be compared so much as one in a thousand to the delights in serving God." (He also said)

"One day knowing the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit is better than 1,000 years of life apart from the Savior."

Question: Why take "one day" at a time? Because...

- Looking too far ahead **discredits God** – that He knows where you are going and what you'll need (and)
- Looking too far ahead **forfeits your present joy** of the moment.

Plan ahead – yes

- But enjoy the season you are in as well and relinquish what is outside of your control!

Question: What makes all this possible?

Answer: Verse 11

*“For the Lord God is a **sun** and **shield**.”*

- “**Sun**” means **illumination** to see clearly where to go.
- “**Shield**” means **protection** as you travel the journey.
- It means the Lord will direct your path and protect you from wrong decisions.

And by the way,

*“No good thing will the Lord withhold from those **who walk uprightly**.”* (Which means)

- Obedience carries its own **reward!**
- Transparency is the way of **progress!**
- Repentance produces wholeness, integrity and **God’s favor!**

Conclusion

And if you’re wondering...does it really pay to serve the Lord?

(V. 12, last verse of Psalm 84)

*“**Blessed is the man (or woman) that trusts in the Lord.**”* (or)

Question: Why are people happy that trust in the Lord?

1. Because faith **removes worry** over the future.
2. Because obedience **removes fear** of lack of provision that is needed.
3. Because repentance **removes guilt** that sin carries upon the conscience.

Why are people happy that trust in the Lord?

4. Because you were made by God for eternity and living on purpose (for God’s purpose) is the only thing in life that can bring joy to your heart and a smile to your face!!!

Altar Call

- Can you **discern** the season you are in?
- Will you resist the temptation to **awfulize**?
- Do you understand that God is **in the middle** of your present journey?
- Are you willing to take **one day** at a time?
- Do you need God to **pour in strength** for the journey?
- Will you **surrender** to God’s purpose for your life?
- Will you be **honest** with God and **transparent** before man?
- Will you walk **hand in hand** with the Lord to enjoy the pilgrimage and journey?

Amen
Bill Kirk