

WEEK FOURTEEN
DAY TWO

As they go through the Valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.

Psalms 84:6

As they go through	עָבַר <i>`abar</i>	– to cross over
the valley	עֵמֶק <i>`emeq</i>	– a vale (i.e. broad depression), valley
of Baca	בָּכָא <i>Baka'</i>	– weeping
they make	שִׂית <i>shiyth</i>	– to place, lay (up), set
it a place of springs	מַעְיָן <i>ma`yan</i>	– a fountain; figuratively, a source (of satisfaction):—spring, well
the early rain	מֹרֶה <i>mowreh</i>	– an archer; also teacher or teaching; the early rain
also	גַּם <i>gam</i>	– also, even, yea, though
covers	עָטָה <i>`atah</i>	– to wrap, i.e. cover, veil, clothe, fill
it with pools	בְּרָכָה <i>Běrakah</i>	– benediction; by implication prosperity:—blessing, pool

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Psalm 84:6**

The Valley of Baca is sometimes called the “Valley of Tears.” Have you ever walked through a Valley of Tears? Not all scholars see this time of tears as caused by tragedy or dramatic events going on. Some see the valley as sterile and dry. This type of valley is more common among believers and can prompt our emptiness and our longing as much as tragedy and hardship.

What does Psalm 84:6 tell us to do when we find ourselves in the Valley? Start digging! The verse says, “they make it a place of springs.” The verb “make” is an extremely strong verb. Yes, God will deliver us and is the power that will change our circumstances, but our response should be to start making room for His deliverance and His answers. One interpretation of this line is that the person walking through the Valley began to dig ditches like cisterns to hold the rain and to dig down to water. Some scholars say that this digging could even open the dry ground up for God to do a miracle—release a spring or a fountain of comfort and blessing.

The final line says that after we dig or make our valley a place of springs, God will then bring the early rain to cover these cisterns we have prepared and create pools in our desert. What a refreshing, miraculous change. Going from the dry, sterile Valley of Baca to a place drenched with pools is a complete turnaround in our circumstances.

What do you need to dig into? God’s Word? More reverent, unrushed prayer time with Him? A simple song or Psalm of worship, even when your voice feels weak and uninspired? As you take the first steps to pray for God’s blessings and help, be assured that He will fill your pools and make fountains appear to drench your parched soul and satiate your longing. Dig in expectation.

And those times when you most do not feel like digging are the times you should run for your tools and dig faster. God’s early rain, the gift of Himself, is coming. It always does.

~ Casey Hawley

WEEK FOURTEEN
DAY FOUR

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On our pilgrimage toward God we will go through the valleys of Baca. According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, Baca can be rendered "weeping" and/or "balsam trees." So, this "Valley of Baca" might also be called the "Valley of Dry Places and Tears" or the "Valley of Balsam Trees."

Balsam trees flourish only in very dry, arid ground, and their resin is used to make the Balm of Gilead mentioned in Jeremiah 8:22:

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?
Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?"

Matthew Henry commenting on this passage says, "Yes, God is able to help and to heal them. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, His Spirit is the Physician there, all-sufficient; so that the people may be healed." It's a beautiful thought that dry, tearful places might also be places of healing and grace.

A well-known African-American spiritual applies the words of the text this way:

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin sick soul.

With beautiful imagery, the psalmist says God blesses our passing through dry places with life-giving springs and refreshing rain-water pools to sustain us as only God can.

I am happy he reminds us that we "go through" the valley—we do not dwell in that place or live in despair. We dwell in the house of the Lord; we live in the love and care of God even in the hard places.

Blessed Lord, you specialize in healing the broken places of life. We believe you can make all things beautiful... even the Valley of Baca. May we know your refreshment and healing when our pilgrimage takes us through the deep valleys of life. May our hearts be set on you Lord, our healer and sustainer, our strength and salvation.

~ Jeanine Dungan

WEEK FOURTEEN
DAY FIVE

**As they go through the Valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
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Psalm 84:6**

The previous verse has proclaimed that those whose strength is in God and whose life is consumed with seeking and following Him are “esher” – “blessed” or “happy.” To twenty-first century Westerners, the next verse may seem contradictory: “As they go through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs....”

What is the Valley of Baca? Possible places include Achor, Rephaim, and Renan, but the phrase can also be translated “valley of weeping.” The Valley of Baca identifies more as a season of life than a geographical location: Any place of barrenness and dryness, suffering and struggling, this is the Christian’s Valley of Baca.

Helen Roseveare, a medical missionary to the Belgian Congo who experienced much suffering in her life, offers an interesting answer to the question, “Why does a God of love allow suffering?” As we consider suffering we endure, Dr. Roseveare corrects our gut reaction of asking “Why?” to instead asking “Is He worthy?” She explains, “It turns the whole thing around. Instead of looking at the price I think I have to pay, I’m thinking of the privilege He wants to give [in suffering]. And always the answer is ‘Yes! He is worthy.’” Instead of being surprised by suffering, we should expect it as the Lord’s training and refining process, rejoicing in the privilege of sharing in Christ’s sufferings (Acts 5, Phil. 3).

God entrusts varying types and differing degrees of suffering to each of His people, but that is the wonder: He Himself prescribes the suffering and is sovereign over it. While evil is the result of man’s sin, God uses pain as “a megaphone to a deaf world” (C.S. Lewis), and as John Piper reminds us, “God does not waste the gift of pain.”

Matthew Henry’s commentary on Psalm 84 confirms the certainty of earthly suffering but reminds of the promise of future glory. Meditate on this truth today: “The pilgrims to the heavenly city may have to pass through many a valley of weeping, and many a thirsty desert; but wells of salvation shall be opened for them, and consolations sent for their support. Those that press forward in their Christian course, shall find God adds grace to their graces. And those who grow in grace, shall be perfect in glory.”

~ Elisabeth Hooker

