**Lessons in Life’s Valleys**

**John 10:27,28; Ps 23**

**Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, March 22**

Jesus repeatedly calls his people to follow him. (Mt 4:19; Jn 21:22) In fact he said that this is one of the key characteristics of “His Sheep”. (Jn 10:27,28) 1 Peter 2:21 reinforces the fact that we’re called to: “Follow his steps.” Eventually, following Jesus will lead us into some dark and discouraging “valleys”. Valley experiences are woven throughout the scriptures because valleys are part of the path of faith. There’s the valley of Achor (***Trouble***) in Joshua 7:24 that was a direct result of Achan’s covetousness. David wrote of (and often passed through) the valley of baca (***tears***) (Ps.84:5-7) as well as the valley of “Fear” or the “shadow of death. (Ps. 23:4) Since all of our paths will pass through such valleys, let’s reflect on some Biblical truths that will shed some light on these dark places.

1. **VALLEYS ARE *INEVITABLE***
2. **There Can Be No Mountain Tops Without Valleys.**
3. **Valleys often reveal the paths to the mountain tops.**
4. **Valleys help us appreciate the Mountains.**

 **B. Not “If” we’ll pass through valleys, But “When!”**

**Is. 43:2“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee….”**

**1 Pt 4:12-13“think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing**

 **happened unto you: But rejoice, as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;”**

**2. VALLEYS ARE *IMPARTIAL (They happen to everyone. See Ro. 8:22,23)***

**A. Good things happen to bad people, & bad things happen to good people! *(Ps. 73)***

 **1) This is not heaven, but rather a sin cursed earth under Satan’s domain.**

 ***(2 Cor 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15-17; 5:19)***

**3. VALLEYS ARE *UNPREDICTABLE***

 **A. They’re subject to change! *Storm run off can create or altar valleys!***

 ***1) How many “business plans” have changed over this past month? James 4:13-17***

 ***2) A good day can rapidly change into a disaster with a phone call! (Job 1)***

 **B. They’re sometimes hard to recognize! (Until you stumble into one)**

 **1) Have you ever had a convenient flat tire?**

***Jer. 4:20* “Destruction upon destruction is cried; the whole land is spoiled… (ravaged, wasted); suddenly are my**

 **tents *(covering, safety, Plans)* spoiled.”**

 ***2) Have any “tents” been spoiled lately?***

**4. VALLEYS ARE *DANGEROUS***

 **A. Those who drift from the shepherd usually end up in**

* **the valley of Baca (weeping) Ps. 84 and / or**
* **the valley of Achor (trouble). (Joshua 7)**
1. **Remember the Wilderness wanderings of Israel? (Heb. 3:7-4:2 and 1 Cor. 10:9-11)**

**B. This is where the predators hunt. (1 Pt. 5:8)**

 **1) Lions hunt the weak and vulnerable. 2 Cor. 2:7,8,11 “…to forgive him, and comfort him, lest**

 **perhaps such a one should swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore …confirm your love toward him…**

 **11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”**

**5. VALLEYS ARE *TEMPORARY***

 **A. Valleys are is part of the path but not the ultimate destination.**

 **Ps. 23:4 “through the valley…”Is. 43:2“Through the river…fire”**

1. **The valley isn’t a dead end, but a temporary path! 2 Cor 4:17-18 “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;… for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (see also 1 Peter 1:6)**

**6. VALLEYS ARE *PURPOSEFUL***

 **A. Even Pain can be Productive! (See Ps. 84:5-7 and Isaiah 40:31)**

 ***Jn 16:33* “In the world, you will have tribulation."**

1. ***Tribulation (Greek:Thlipsis) meaning affliction, trouble, anguish, burdens.***
2. ***from Thilbo: PRESSURE!***
3. ***God uses “pressure” to Purify & Shape us! (See 1 Peter 1:7)***
4. ***Pain & problems have a purifying effect on faith! Is. 48:10,11***
5. ***Tribulation (Latin: Tribulum) An Instrument used to separate wheat and chaff. (Lk 22:31,32)***

**Conclusion: When God leads us through valleys that are:**

 **1. Inevitable 2. Impartial 3. Unpredictable 4. Dangerous 5. Temporary**

 **Remember that they are also *Purposeful*. He’s walking and working with (and through) us to**

 **accomplish His purposes for our Good and His Glory. Romans 8:28**

**Jn 16:33 ”These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.**

 **The opportunity to “join” God’s purposes, partnership (Mt 11:28,29) and Peace.**

 **In the world ye shall have tribulation: (Thlipsis: Pressure, problems) but be of good cheer; (tharse’o:**

 **confidence/ courage) I have overcome the world.”**

 **And so can we!**

**1 Jn 4:4 “Ye are of God, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”**

**1 John 5:4 “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. “**

 **Application John 10:27**

**“My sheep hear my voice…” (What’s He trying to tell you?)**

**“and they follow me!” (Where’s He trying to take you?) Will you listen and follow?**

**Ro 8:35-39 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36  As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37  Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

**For I am persuaded, (Peithō: convinced The root word of “Faith” {Pistis})**

**that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,**

**Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,**

**which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

* **Will you make Him Your Lord?**

***“Fear not, little flock, from the cross to the throne, From death into life He went for His own;***

***All power in earth, all power above, Is given to Him for the flock of His love.***

***Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe;***

***Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe.***

***Fear not, little flock, He goeth ahead, Your Shepherd selecteth the path you must tread;***

***The waters of Marah He’ll sweeten for thee, He drank all the bitter in Gethsemane.***

 ***Fear not, little flock, whatever your lot, He enters all rooms, the doors being shut,***

***He never forsakes; He never is gone, So count on His presence in darkness and dawn.”***

**(Paul Rader 1921)**