

Psalm 84 (6)

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me this evening to Psalm 84 and verse 6. Psalm 84 and verse 6, where we read these words.

As they pass through the valley of Beka, they make it a place of springs. The autumn rains also cover it with pools.

The great Puritan Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary on Psalm 84 and verse 6, Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Beka, but even that may be made a well if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Beka. The sweetest Psalms that we sing all contain references to something like a valley of Beka.

Psalm 23, the valley of the shadow of death. Psalm 130, Lord from the depths I cried to you. Psalm 40, he lifted me out of the slimy pit from the muck and the mire.

[1 : 16] These Psalms mean the most to us in life because they speak to us the most about life. They don't deny the reality of how difficult life can sometimes be for us, but they explain to us how we can deal with all its challenges.

There's a harmful lie that the Christian life is somewhat of a bed of roses. Trusting in Jesus is the path to health, wealth and happiness. Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself.

He must take up his cross and he must follow me. Cross-bearing involves passing through valleys of Beka, valleys of the shadow of death, depths and slimy pits.

This is the Christian life. We sometimes encounter challenges, but through Christ we overcome them all. We become more than conquerors. This is the power of the gospel at work within us. What then does this verse, Psalm 84, verse 6, have to tell us about how to keep going on in our pilgrimage to heaven, even when we must pass through these valleys of Beka?

[2 : 34] What's the comfort here for us and what does it have to do with prayer, which is after all why we're meeting together this evening? Let me suggest we understand this verse in two stages.

First, in Beka's Vale. And secondly, through Beka's Vale. In Beka's Vale. Through Beka's Vale. Let me read Matthew Henry's wonderful quote again.

So first of all, then, we want to look at in Beka's Vale.

In Beka's Vale. With the passing of time, it's become impossible to identify where Beka's Vale was or what Beka's Vale really is. There are various suggestions, but the commentators are all agreed it wasn't a nice place.

Let me remind you that the writers of Psalm 84 are on a journey of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And on their way there, they must pass through this difficult valley.

[3 : 42] At other times, they feel perhaps as though they're soaring on the mountaintops. But as they pass through this valley, they feel like they're wading in treacle. There are two linked understandings of what this valley of Beka may refer to.

The first is that it corresponds to a place of weeping. A place of weeping. The Hebrew word Beka sounds very much like the Hebrew word for crying.

So weeping is probably the most likely candidate for what this valley was. It's a place of weeping. And this is a powerful translation, if for no other reason than this.

The springs the pilgrims dig. The pools they find in this valley are filled with their own tears. You'll have heard the song Cry Me a River, sung back in the 1960s, either the original or Justin Timberlake's newer version.

That's the idea here in Psalm 84, verse 6, if you accept that Beka means weeping. The conditions in the valley are so difficult and so painful that the pilgrims wotted it with their tears.

[4 : 56] This is a dark reading of verse 6. It's dark, but it's also real. There are times in our lives as Christians when our hearts are broken and our eyes are filled with tears.

We've all had our shade of them, I'm sure. I don't need to go through them with you. They are difficult days. And when you're in Beka's Vale, it seems that you're never getting out.

There just seems no light at the end of the tunnel. Everything's so bleak. The tears, they fall so freely that they water the ground around you. There are disappointments and depressions and doubts and frustrations and griefs and exhaustions.

They break your heart. They make you cry. But God's saying to us here in Psalm 84, verse 6, You're not the first to have passed through this valley.

My people have been passing through this valley of weeping for thousands of years. Pour out your heart to me. Tell me all about your pain. And I'll store up all your tears in a bottle.

[6 : 09] And so if Beka means a place of weeping, the lesson for us here is God's invitation to tell him everything, to hold nothing back, to shout, to scream at him in prayer if we've got to, not to pretend somehow.

That doesn't hurt. He's our father. He has very big shoulders. But then the second variation of Beka relates not so much to weeping as it does to dryness.

This is probably the understanding with which we're most familiar. The valley of Beka is bone dry. It's like Death Valley in California. There's no water. There's just parched animal bones.

The heat's oppressive. It's so very dry. The valley of Beka is the place of dryness. If this is the correct understanding, then it's God who provides the water these pilgrims need to get through. It's God who provides the springs. It's God who sends the autumn rains. We all pass through times in our Christian lives of great need when we don't feel we've got enough to keep going.

[7 : 22] Just like these pilgrims didn't have enough water to get through the valley of dryness. So we also feel that we lack the strength, the durability, the perseverance to keep going.

To use Matthew Henry's quote again, our way to heaven seems to have reached a dead end. We don't seem to be getting any further than this. In the context of the Lord's Prayer, for whatever reason, we don't seem to have our daily bread.

We're thinking of giving up. We can't see a way ahead. It's so very dry. If that is the correct interpretation, that Beka's a valley of dryness, then God's saying to us in this verse, you are not the first to have passed through a valley of dryness in your Christian life.

My people have been passing through this valley for thousands of years. call upon me to provide for you. Cry out to me for help, and I will send springs of water and flood the ground with autumn rains. I'll strengthen you when you're weak, and I'll hold you up when you're falling. And so Beka means the place of dryness. The lesson for us here in prayer is God's invitation to pray for his provision.

[8 : 44] To pray again that petition of the Lord's Prayer, give us this day our daily bread, and to claim the promise that he gives us in his word. My God will supply all your needs, according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Well, either way, the valley of weeping or the valley of dryness, there are rich lessons for us here in prayer. In prayer, we hold nothing back from God.

We tell him everything we feel. We pray for his provision for us in times of great need, when it seems that we can't go on anymore. The valley of Beka may be a fearful place, but there are lessons for us here, which we'll learn nowhere else.

And according to all the Psalms we love, we have to pass through this valley on our way to heaven. So that's in Beka's Vale.

But secondly, through Beka's Vale, through Beka's Vale. You see, there's a promise for us here in Psalm 84, verse 6, if we read it carefully.

[9 : 51] Let me read it again. As they go through the valley of Beka. Not only, as I've said, are we not alone as we go through this valley, because they is plural.

There are many other Christians, thousands of other Christians who are where we are. But more importantly, we're going through it. In is a static word.

Through is a dynamic word. Through means that our experience of the valley of Beka has a beginning, and a middle, and the end. And that's the promise here for us. That's how we can persevere through the weeping and through the dryness.

These are temporary. They're not permanent. The way to heaven lies through the valley of Beka. We might be going through the valley of Beka.

But it's part of the way to heaven. It's just a section we all have to get through to get to our destination. That's the promise for us.

[10 : 58] This difficult and challenging set of circumstances we're enduring right now, this dryness, this weeping. It had a beginning. It has a middle. And it will have an end.

The valley of Beka is not our destination. It's just a stage of the journey. And even here in this valley, we cry out to God and learn that our heavenly Father has a very soft heart toward us and big shoulders for us.

We learn that he can provide water for us, even in a parched land. You'll all know that my wife and I have taken up running and we record our runs on an app on our phone called Strava.

We might run a 10-kilometer run and Strava will record the whole run for us. But Strava divides that 10K run into segments, sections.

One of the most popular running sections or segments in Glasgow is the path that leads from the Clydeside Distillery to the Transport Museum. So you know where I am down beside the Clyde.

[12 : 11] On Strava, it has the rather Glasgow title, She's Turned the Wains Against Us. It's only 200 meters long, this section.

Truth be told, it's a very flat section. It's very easy to run. But it's only a segment. It's not the whole 10-kilometer run. In the same way, the Valley of Beka is just a segment.

It's not the whole of life. It might be dry, it might be painful, but you're going to get through whatever your Valley of Beka is. It's a segment on the way to heaven, just as she's turned the wains against us, is a segment in our Glasgow Clydeside 10K run.

The Apostle Peter confirms this promise for us when in 1 Peter 5.10 he writes, After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

The Valley of Beka is a suffering segment on our way to heaven. It corresponds to us suffering for a little while.

[13 : 34] We must learn the lessons in prayer the Valley of Beka has for us and then claim the promise that this valley has an end. It's not, it won't go on forever.

It's got an end. God will see us through. Pray for grace to overcome and win through. And let me assure you that though it may be a fingertip experience at times, our Heavenly Father will provide everything we need through the Holy Spirit's power at work within us.

I leave the last words to a lovely piece of German choral music which renders Psalm 84 verse 6 in this lovely way. From strength to strength through Beka's veil of woe they pass along in prayer and gushing streams of living water flow dug by their faithful care.

The rain is sent from heaven to fertilize the land. And I love this line. And a wayside grace is given till they and Zion stand.

Amen.