



## In the Valley but Not Forsaken

*Psalms 37:23-26 -- The steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who holds his hand. I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread. All day long he is gracious and lends; and his descendants are a blessing.*

### Introduction

1. The interesting thing to yet be discovered by many Christians is that the life of the Lord's people is lived in a different vein than that of the whole world.
2. Too many of the godly expect life to be nothing but peaceful and often fear the adversity that may come their way as those who stand for what is right.
3. The apostle Paul makes two statements that somehow do not seem to sink in. The first is that it is "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). The second is that "God has not given us a spirit of timidity..." (2 Timothy 1:7).
4. What we will do in this lesson is try to show the depth of the valley one needs to traverse at some point while walking as Christians, and then the magnitude of God's grace to deal with any adversity. The two need to go together to complete life.

### A. How Deep & Dark the Valley Can Be

1. A primary fault is not properly defining, or understanding, the words that the Bible uses to convey tremendous ideas.
2. "Forsake" is often taken to mean: "not present" or "ignore." The following passages, with their examples, help illustrate a far direr meaning to the term.

*2 Timothy 4:10 -- For Demas, having loved this present world, has **deserted** me and gone to Thessalonica...*

*2 Timothy 4:16 -- At my first defense no one supported me, but all **deserted** me; may it not be counted against them.*

*Matthew 27:46 -- And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying,.. "My God, My God, why hast Thou **forsaken** Me?"*

3. Even as God has given us this vivid impression of what forsaking could imply, He goes further to show, no matter how bad it looks, He will never let it happen.

*Acts 2:27 -- "Because Thou wilt not **abandon** My soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."*

4. Paul alludes to this phenomena in his own life over and over. As an apostle he constantly had to demonstrate the effectiveness of God's "not forsaking" in order to impress upon his fellow Christians how things truly work in God's reality.

*2 Corinthians 4:9-11 -- ...persecuted, but **not forsaken**; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh...*

*2 Corinthians 1:8-10 -- For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us....*

*2 Corinthians 11:23-30 -- ...often in danger of death: five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep... in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren... if I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.*

5. In many ways the Lord and the Apostles were called upon to endure and suffer many circumstances and to such degrees that we never will, however, there is a basic principle that still prevails as part of the extremity of faith itself. This is seen in the woman Elijah was sent to care for (See also the widow with her mite, the list of Hebrews 11:32-38, and the sufferings of the Jewish Christians – Hebrews 10:32-34).

**1 Kings 17:11-13** -- He [Elijah] called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. "Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and make me a little bread cake from it first..."

## B. How Great NOT Forsaken Can Be

**Psalms 23:4-6** -- Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

1. If this series of lessons is based upon this passage, there is much pointed out by the Psalmist that correlates with this lesson and the extreme provision of God.
2. While walking through the valley of the shadow the child of God is to be without fear of evil. The Psalmist speaks of God's comfort. Paul's own examples of affliction are in the context of this very subject.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-5** -- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

3. The Psalmist writes that God prepares a table even in the midst of enemies, where the head is anointed and the cup overflows. Paul adds that if the sufferings are abundant then so is the comfort.
4. The Israelites are a classic example of God's taking care of His people. He not only rescued them from Egyptian slavery but He: protected them from their enemies in their wanderings; provide water and food; made sure their clothes did not wear out; and finally drove out the giants before them to gave them cities they did not build, vineyards they did not plant, wells they did not dig, provide increase in the land and blessings upon their posterity.
5. This is promised even more abundantly when after they betray Him and He has to bring about the curses that nearly annihilate and scatter them to far nations, IF they return and obey (Deuteronomy 30:1-14). It finds fulfillment in Christian life.

## C. Further: Grace Upon Grace

**John 1:14,16** -- And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth... For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

1. If you ask most people to define God's "grace" is they will say, "Unmerited favor," usually referring to the salvation offered by God through the death of His Son.
2. What then is the "grace" upon grace? There is more here to life than we can imagine.
3. A regenerated life is ALL about the grace and work of God (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5-7) in an individual's life.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** -- But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

4. God gives an unequal return for one's service to Him and to others (Luke 6:38), and He enhances one's capacity to give (2 Corinthians 8:1-5), thus insuring one will not go wanting (2 Corinthians 8:13-15), especially in spiritual service.

5. God gives endurance for undeserved suffering (1 Peter 2:19-20) as just one of grace's MANIFOLD forms (1 Peter 5:10).

*1 Peter 4:10 -- As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

6. God promises to take care of His own beyond their requests. The power of prayer, the blessings piled on, the provision, the encouragement, the protection and the comforting, are all viewed as God's grace which enhances our lives.

*Ephesians 3:20 -- Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.*

7. There are also special endowments by the Spirit in a Christian's life (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28), and Paul encouraged Christians to desire the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31). Thus, by inviting the challenge of suffering for Christ, God will arm you with whatever you need. You cannot know and experience Christianity and the grace of God by just sticking your toe in the water. The true Christian must plunge.

*Romans 12:6-8 -- And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

8. The unloaded conscience is by nature thankful (1 Corinthians 10:29-30), thus the Christian's speech and the display of gratitude in spiritual song.

*Colossians 4:6 -- Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.*

*Colossians 3:16 -- Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

#### **D. Invitation**

1. If we are willing to commit ourselves to greater faith (See Romans 1:17 – from faith to faith), then God is ready to commit to greater comfort and grace.