A passion to keep pioneering – Psalm 84:5-7

"Blessed are those whose strength is in You, in whose heart is a passion to pioneer. As they go through the valley of Baca (dryness/tears) they make it a place of springs. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God …."

If you are going to be effective in this part of the world you will need to have a passion for pioneering – for breaking new ground. This was the spirit of Paul when he wrote***, " … I make it my ambition to preach the Gospel not where Christ has already been named …."*** (Rom. 15:20)
So we need to be **pioneering visionaries**. But those who have a passion for pioneering will have to pass through the Valley of Baca, which can be translated as 'tears' or 'balsam trees'. (In Arabic 'Baca' means tears, weeping.) Balsam trees only grow in dry places so the Valley of Baca could be translated either 'Valley of Tears' or 'The Thirsty Valley'.

If you are pioneering in this area you will probably enter into dry and barren places in your life and ministry and there will be many tears and hardships. So you need to discover how to turn the 'Valleys of Baca' into a place of springs – life and growth and blessing.

Psalm 87: 6 says, ***"All my springs are in You"***. Springs speak of refreshment and fruitfulness. So if you learn how to get through the 'Valley of Tears' you will reach your objective. All God has put on your heart will be achieved. You will arrive! Hudson Taylor said that there are usually three stages in a work of God: Stage 1 – impossible; Stage 2 – difficult; Stage 3 – done.

Many commentators think the Valley of Baca is the same as the Valley of Rephaim. (The people there were a formidable people – giants like the Anakim.) Some think it may just be a metaphorical valley.

In Scripture, three things happened in this valley (Baca/Rephaim). These are three discoveries to get to the "done" stage.

First event

God's people discovered God is the Lord of Breakthroughs (2 Sam. 5:17-20)

The Philistines (the enemy) had spread themselves all over the valley and blocked it so that David and his men could not go through. David enquired of the Lord, ***"Shall I go against the Philistines? And the Lord said to David, 'Go up …."***. David and his men went up and defeated their enemies.

He called the valley **Baal-perazim** – **The Lord of Breakthroughs**. This is one of the great titles of God in Scripture.

If you have a passion to pioneer then you need to discover that again and again God will break through the dark places, the dry places, the places of weeping. The strategy had to come from God, but it involved a great deal of effort by David and his troops. The Lord of Breakthroughs is able to work where there are giant problems and spiritually desert-like places where nothing grows.

The secret is not to let Satan shrink your vision by discouragement, failure, fatigue or by the betrayal of others.

- **Don't be intimidated by the enemy**. Usually the number one battle we face is with our own fear. Expect the enemy to block your way – to cover the valley. Face your fears. Our fears are often irrational.

- **Strategy is usually unique to the time and the place**. It is birthed out of prayer.
- **<u>Our</u> efforts are sometimes required** and this necessitates faith that the breakthroughs will come.

The result: the awesomeness of seeing God, the Lord of Breakthroughs, at work on our "field"! So how is the enemy seeking to block your path? What are your problems? Finances? Lack of people? Opposition of one sort or another? Discover the Lord of breakthroughs in your own situation and watch Him break through on your behalf.

Second event

Prayer revealed God's strategy (2 Sam. 5:22-25)

"The Philistines came up again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David enquired of the Lord, the Lord said, 'Go around to their rear and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the top of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you …..'. And David did as the Lord commanded him."

So this was the same situation as before, the enemy had spread out all over the valley and David and his army were prevented from advancing. David was probably tempted to think that he was in the same situation as before and so he should use the same strategy – but no! God's plans are unique to the place and to the time. David was wise and he prayed. Presumption is one of the great dangers we face.

God strategies – the breakthrough strategies – are birthed out of prayer. Notice that this time there was no human effort. David's army just watched the ***"angelic armies of the living God"*** move into battle on their behalf. This is awesome! But it does happen!

But David's army didn't just watch. God told them to "rouse" themselves – i.e. to act promptly in following up all that God was doing. We must learn to move with God in His time. We often miss out because of our failure to move rapidly. We should always be ready for action with 'a rapid deployment force'. Too often we are bogged down and can't move or can only move slowly. We hear ***"the sound of marching over the tops of the balsam trees"***, but we are already over-committed and so can't help.

We need to learn the principles of spiritual warfare so that we are ready when we are confronted by the enemy. Even in a crisis, we must learn to wait on God and to intercede in faith. There are prayer weapons that can overthrow the powers of darkness:

- ✓ to abolish them and end their influence (Is. 2:18 and 2 Tim. 1:10)
- ✓ to beat them down (2 Kings 13:25; Ps. 18:42: Is. 27:12; Jer. 46:5)
- ✓ to break in pieces their influence (Ps. 2:9, 10:15, 58:6, 72:4; Is. 42:2; Dan. 2:40)
- ✓ to prevail over and bind (2 Chron. 14:11; Ps. 9:19; Is. 42:13; Mt. 16:18)

So expect the supernatural armies of the Lord God of Hosts to move and be really ready for the follow-up.

Third event

The courage to rely on others and serve others in the battle (2 Sam. 23:13-18)

This is a well-known story that happened in this valley – the Valley of Rephaim. Again the enemy was spread out over the valley blocking the way. David and his men were hiding in the cave of Abdullam.

"David longed for water and said, 'O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate.' "

The key here is the courage and heroism of these three men who, for the love of their king, broke through the enemy and reached the well and brought back a pitcher of water for David to drink.

You need to find colleagues/friends who are completely loyal to you, for you may well find that others will break through on your behalf! Strength to be courageous comes from God – it comes from His infinite strength, but it also comes from the 'team' – the three of them.

Pioneering requires raw courage – not so much physical courage, although it does include this, but especially **spiritual** courage. Remember when Joshua took over from Moses and the Lord appeared to him (Joshua 1:1-9). Three times the Lord reminded Joshua, ***"Be strong and courageous"*** (v. 6); ***"Only be strong and very courageous"*** (v. 7); ***"Be strong and courageous, do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go"***. (v. 9)

Why is courage important? Part of the answer is **because courage triggers the supernatural**.
In 1 Samuel 14:6-15 there is an example of this. Saul was king and the Philistines were attacking. Jonathan and his armour bearer decided to attack the enemy army by themselves. ***"It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few."***
So the two of them set out ***"very courageously"*** (used 4 times) to attack the enemy by themselves. Their courage triggered an earthquake and there was total panic. Courage comes from God. So the two men plus God formed a team and the enemy was defeated!

One discipline that gives us courage is the discipline of maintaining joy – **militant joy**. This is so important in this part of the world. In Genesis 26 Isaac found that the enemy kept blocking up his wells (v. 15, 18, 19-25). Jesus told the Samaritan woman He met at a well about wells of joy and of life (Jn. 4:13-14). So often, like Isaac, we have to keep re-digging the wells of joy and laughter.
To do some digging, try shouting. Go to a lonely place and shout praises to the Lord. David learned to, ***"Strengthen himself in the Lord his God"***. (1 Sam. 30:6)

Read Psalm 18 – all 50 verses. It is a wonderful Psalm with many great affirmations. The Lord is:

- my rock
- my fortress
- my deliverer
- my refuge
- my salvation
- my stronghold

v. 6 ***"In my distress I called to the Lord, to my God I cried for help."***

v. 16 ***"He drew me out of many waters."***

v. 18 ***"The Lord was my support."***

v. 29 ***"For by You, I can run against a troop of enemies and by My God I can leap over a wall."***

The Psalm continues in the same way right on until verse 50.

So we need a passion to keep pioneering and we need to learn how to break through the valleys where the enemy is so often encamped blocking our path. It is in this valley that you will find the blessings of God on your life and ministry. You will discover two great blessings that will refresh you:

1. **Joy** – released into your heart and life. You will experience much affirmation from God causing you to sing and shout.
2. **Peace** – having let all your fears go, you will experience the God of Peace filling your heart and your mind.