

## CCC GODS PRESCRIPTION FOR P5

### DARK VALLEYS

There is an old Arab parable that says: All sunshine and no rain makes a desert." If you never have any down times, dark times, gloomy times in your life you'll be dried up. You'll have no depth to yourself, no maturity. It takes good times and bad times to make a mature person. Life is a mixture of pain and pleasure, of victory and defeat, of success and failure, of mountain tops and valleys. Today we're going to look at God's prescription to the Dark Valleys of life.

Even in our darkest valleys, our darkest days, God is there.

*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* Psalm 23:4

In Israel there is a real Valley of the Shadow of Death. It's a steep, deep and narrow canyon. The sun only hits the bottom of it when it's directly overhead at high noon. The rest of the time the bottom of the canyon is dark. David probably led his sheep through the valley of the shadow of death as he was growing up. As you look in the Bible, the term "valley" also refers to all kinds of rough times in life. Joshua talks about the Valley of Calamity; Psalm 84 talks about the Valley of Weeping; Hosea talks about the Valley of Trouble

So how do I handle the dark valleys of life?

There are five facts about valleys that you need to remember whenever you go through a tough time:

#### **1. VALLEYS ARE INEVITABLE**

They are going to happen so you might as well count on them. Jesus was very realistic about it. In John 16, He says

*"In the world you will have trouble."* It's not a matter of *if*, it's *when*. It's going to happen. You're going to have difficulty, disappointment, discouragement in life. There will be times of suffering, sorrow, sickness. There will be times of frustration, failure and fatigue. They are going to happen. They are a normal part of life. Don't be surprised by it. What to remember when going through Valley's

## **2. VALLEYS ARE UNPREDICTABLE**

You can't plan them, you can't time them, schedule them. Valleys are always unexpected and what I have found out is they usually come at the worst time -- when you don't have time, when you're unprepared. When we're going through valley's we also need to remember.

## **3. VALLEYS ARE IMPARTIAL**

No one is immune to them. No one is insulated from pain and sorrow. No one gets to skate through life problem free.

Everybody has problems -- good people and bad people. Valley's don't care how good or bad you are. Jesus said, *"It rains on the just and the unjust too."* Matthew 5:45

## **4. VALLEYS ARE TEMPORARY**

They have an end to them. They don't last. They are not a permanent location. David says, *"Even though I walk through the valley..."* The valley is not something you stay in your entire life. It's something you go through -- it's a circumstance, it's a situation that has a season to it. They come to pass. I Peter 1:6 *"There is a wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here."*

## **5. VALLEYS ARE PURPOSEFUL**

God has a reason for taking you through the valleys. He's got a reason behind it. I Peter 1:6-7 *"At the present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials."* He says *temporary* -- The Good News is they are temporary

and that God says if you allow I will turn your valleys around and bring good from them... So those are the things you need to remember when you're going through the valley's;

## **WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GO THROUGH DARK VALLEYS?**

David said, "*I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*"

### **1. REFUSE TO BE DISCOURAGED**

"*I will fear no evil.*" I've always thought Christians should be the ones wearing all of the "No fear" T-shirts. I will fear no evil; I fear nothing. That's what David says as a Christian, who puts his faith in God. "*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*". It says "I walk" -- not "I run through it" or "I panic and run the

other way". To walk means calmly, deliberately make steps through the valley. David says "*I'm not going to be afraid. I will calmly walk through the valley.*"

Refuse to be discouraged. You can't go around the valley. You can't go under the valley. You can't go over the valley. You can only go through the valley. Here he says "I will not fear evil". The word, *Will*, implies a choice. It implies an act of volition, it implies a decision. I will not be afraid. How do I choose not to be discouraged, by focusing on God's power rather than on your problem? The difference is what you're focusing on. You need to focus, not on your circumstance, but on Christ. Not on the situation, but on the Savior. Not on your problem, but on God's power. "*God will strengthen you with his own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient.*" Col. 1:11

## **2. REMEMBER THAT GOD IS WITH ME**

David said, "*For You will be with me. You're with me every moment.*" God not only promises us His power in the valley, He promises His presence. You will never go through a valley in life by yourself, if you have asked Christ to come into your life and be your Lord, to be your Shepard. You will never go through a dark day alone. God has said, "*I will be with you.*" Isa. 43:2 "*When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fires of oppression, you will not be burned up – the flames will not consume you.*" You're not going to drown, burn up, die -- God says I am with you. He will be with you every step in the valley. God says there is nothing to fear when Jesus is near.

## **3. I RELY ON GOD'S PROTECTION AND GUIDANCE**

David reminds himself that God's rod and staff comforts him. The rod and staff were the two basic tools that a shepherd used to protect and guide the sheep. A rod was basically about two foot long, at the end of it was a heavy knot. Shepherds were very skilled at hurling the rod, like a missile, at anything that would attack the sheep. God is saying, "*When you go through the valley, I'm defending you. I'm protecting you.*" God says "I'm going to defend you, protect you." When you're going through the valley, the dark valley of life, God is not sitting in heaven unconcerned and apathetic. The Good Shepherd fights for you. While you're fighting for your life in that depression, God is fighting with you. He's fighting off spiritual forces. He is your defender and protector. That's what the rod

represents. "*Your staff comforts me.*" A staff was a long stick with a crook at the end of it. The shepherd uses a staff to guide and comfort. He will use the staff to draw the sheep in close to him. He will use the staff to lift them up when they're down. He brings them in close with their staff. He also uses the staff to guide them. When you go through the valley, you're not going through it alone. God's going with you and He's using His rod and staff to protect and guide.

It's obvious that Christians go through valleys just like everybody does. Christians have disappointments.

Christians get sick. Christians experience tragedies.

Christians lose loved ones. Christians have financial problems. God's people have family problems. Believers go through valleys just like everybody does. But there is a difference and it's a big difference.

The difference is that while believers and non-believers go through the same valleys of life, the difference for the Christian is not the absence of the shadow but the presence of the Shepherd. God is with you.