

The Valley of Baca

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie street, London, on Lord's Day Evening, July 28, 1846

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength: every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Psalm 84:5, 6, 7

The time and circumstances under which this Psalm was written we may fairly gather from the internal evidences of the Psalm itself. *First*, then, this Psalm was composed whilst "the ark of God dwelt within curtains," and therefore whilst the tabernacle was yet standing, *before* Solomon's temple was erected. This we gather from verse 1: "How amiable are thy tabernacles," (or tents) "O Lord of hosts!" *Secondly*, it was written *after* the ark of God had been brought to Mount Zion, the city of David, of which we have a full account given us in 2 Samuel 6; this we gather from the 7th verse, "They go from strength to strength; every one of them *in Zion* appeareth before God." *Thirdly*, the Psalm was composed during the time of David's flight from Jerusalem: for it is the language of one who was sighing after the courts of the Lord, and yet was debarred from approaching them. By this internal evidence, therefore, the time is strictly fixed to the flight and exile of David from Jerusalem on account of Absalom's rebellion.

David, then, in his exile, was mourning after the blessings and privileges of those true believers who were going up to the house of the Lord, according to his command, to worship at Jerusalem. *We* cannot enter into the feelings of a true Israelite upon these occasions. The Lord has ordained that three times in the year all their males should appear before him. They came up from different parts of the land, according to this command; and *there*, from time

to time, the Lord met with and blessed their souls. *There* they had a glimpse of the glory of the Lord dwelling between the cherubim; *there* they had their prayers answered, and their souls refreshed; and *there* they beheld, typically and figuratively foreshadowed, "the true tabernacle," the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, "which God pitched, and not man."

But David was debarred from going up to the house of the Lord. He was sitting solitary, and mourning, not only on account of the deep mortification of being driven from his throne, but also at not being able to come before the Lord, as in times of old. He envied therefore the very sparrow and the swallow that could fly through the air, and take up their happy abode beneath those altars which his soul so longed to approach. And doubtless, there was one feeling which pressed very hard on David's soul: *that his sins had driven him into exile*. The finger of scorn throughout Israel was pointed at him as an open adulterer and convicted murderer. Thus, he had not only the melancholy feeling of being debarred from approaching God's sanctuary; but this feeling was deeply increased by the guilt and shame that he had brought upon his own head.

Now while he was thus solitarily musing upon these pilgrims going upward to Jerusalem to worship the Lord in his earthly courts in Zion, his soul seems to have fallen into a train of holy and spiritual meditation. This earthly pilgrimage foreshadowed to him the pilgrimage of a saint heavenward; and thus, viewing all the circumstances of their journey, his thoughts turned upon what this pilgrimage spiritually typified; and he breaks out into this blessing upon God's worshipping people : *"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will still be praising thee."*

But are these the only persons blessed? No. He adds *"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;"* who has

something more than the mere outward privilege of drawing near these courts; whose inward strength is in God, and who draws his supplies out of his fulness of grace and mercy. "Blessed is the man," he further adds, "in whose heart," that is, in whose experience, through divine teaching and divine testimony, "are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well."

In considering the words of the text this evening, I shall view them as the Holy Ghost has given us the spiritual clue to their import. There is a *true* spiritualization of God's word, and there is a *false* spiritualization of it. Some men can see deep mysteries in the "nine-and-twenty knives" that came from Babylon; in the oak beneath which Deborah was buried; and I dare say, some would find unfathomable depths in "Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns." (Acts 28:15.) But we cannot build up a spiritual interpretation except the Holy Ghost has laid a foundation, nor track out a path unless he has given us a clue. But as the blessed Spirit, by the mouth and pen of David, has here given us a spiritual clue, we may follow these pilgrims in their journey up to the earthly Jerusalem, and see in it a lively representation of the true pilgrims journeying to heaven, their happy home.

We will then, as the Lord may enable, endeavour severally to unfold the distinct clauses of our text. Observe, then,

I.—*First*, the blessing that David pronounces upon the man whose strength is in God. "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.*" But where shall we find that man? Where are we to look for him? In what corner does he dwell? I am bold to say, that no man ever had his strength in God until he had lost all his own. I am bold to say, from Scripture and from experience, that no man ever felt or ever knew, spiritually and experimentally, what it was to put his trust and confidence in God, who had not been thoroughly weaned and emptied from putting all trust and

confidence in himself. Therefore, when David pronounces this spiritual blessing, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee," his eye was fixed upon a certain gracious character, one who had been deeply emptied, one whose strength had been turned into weakness, his wisdom into folly, and his comeliness into corruption. How are you, how am I, to put our trust in an invisible God? Can I see him? And can I put my trust in an invisible being? It is impossible, unless I have faith to see God, who is invisible. Two distinct things must therefore meet in my heart, under the Spirit's secret operations, before I can come in for any share of this blessing. I must, first, by a work of grace upon my soul be weakened; as we read, "He weakened my strength in the way." "He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help." I must be weakened by being experimentally taught that all my natural strength in divine things is but impotency and helplessness. And how can I learn this, but through a series of trials? I must have temptations; and find my strength against these temptations utterly powerless. I must have trials; and find these trials so great, that my own strength is insufficient to bear them. I must have a discovery of God's majesty, purity, and holiness, that all my strength may wither at the glance of the eye of God in my conscience. I must sink down into creature ruin, hopelessness, and helplessness, before I can ever give up the fancied idea of strength in myself. Man is born an independent creature. It is the very breath of a natural man. "Independence" was once my boasted motto. It suits the proud heart to rest upon itself. And our rebellious nature will always rest upon self, until self has received its death-blow from the slaughter-weapon that the man clothed with linen carries in his hand. (Ezek. 9.)

Now this in most cases will take a series of trials to produce. We are not stripped in a day; we are not emptied in a day; we are not ruined and brought to beggary and rags in a day. Many of the Lord's people are years learning

that they have nothing and are nothing. They have to pass through trial after trial, temptation after temptation, affliction after affliction, before they learn the secret of creature weakness, creature helplessness, and creature hopelessness.

But there is another requisite. It is not sufficient for me to know my poverty, my ruin, my wretchedness; I must have something more than this revealed in my heart. I must have another lesson unfolded to my soul by the power of God the Spirit. I must learn this sacred truth, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." I must be taught to say, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." I must know what the Lord Jesus so sweetly unfolded to the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.)

Have you found out these two things in your heart? How many years have some here made a profession, have come to hear the truth preached, have approved of the testimony of God's servants, and have read the writings of gracious men! But have you learnt these two lessons yet? *first*, creature weakness, helplessness, and hopelessness; to sink down into your miserable self; to be filled with confusion; to have nothing in yourselves but rags and ruin? And then, has the Spirit opened up, brought down into your heart, and unfolded to your soul that precious Mediator between God and man, "the Hope of Israel," the blessed Jesus, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, that on him you may lean, in him you may trust, and upon whom you may rely to bring you safely through all? If you have learnt experimentally in your conscience those two lessons,—creature weakness and Creator might—the helplessness of man and the power of God—*then* you come in for the blessing, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."

II.—*"In whose heart are the ways of them, who passeth*

through the valley of Baca, make it a well." David casts a glimpse here at those pilgrims who were travelling their upward journey to worship God in Zion. He marks their road, and takes occasion to spiritualize it; for he says, "*In whose heart,*" in whose experience, in whose soul, "are the ways" of these pilgrims Zionward.

What are these "*ways?*" It is this, that "passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well." This valley of Baca appears to have been a very perilous pass, through which pilgrims journeyed toward Jerusalem: and on account of the difficulties, dangers, and sufferings that they met with, it was named "the valley of Baca," or 'the valley of weeping,' 'the vale of tears.'

And is not this very emblematical and figurative of the vale of tears through which God's people journey in their course heavenward? There are many circumstances which draw tears from their weeping eyes. Depend upon it, if, in the course of your profession, you have never known anything of this valley of Baca, you have mistaken the road; you are not travelling through the true valley to reach Zion; you are taking another route which leads not heavenward, but to eternal destruction. Many are the circumstances in providence that draw tears from the eyes, and cause poignant sorrow to be felt in the heart of the true child of God. Men naturally have many sorrows in their course through life. But the Lord's people seem to have a double portion allotted to them. They have the cares of life like their fellow-mortals; they have sources of temporal sorrow in common with their fellow-sinners. But, in addition to these providential afflictions, they have that which is peculiar to themselves—spiritual grief, burdens, and sorrows. Some of the Lord's people are deeply sunk in poverty; others, have an almost daily cross from a suffering and weakly tabernacle; others, have to endure persecutions, and to receive many severe blows from sinners and severer from saints; others, have family

afflictions; others are mourning over their blighted schemes, and the disappointment of all their temporal expectations. But, added to these temporal trials that the Lord's people have to pass through in common with their fellow-men, they have spiritual trials that far outweigh any of a temporal nature. Sharp and cutting temptations; the workings of a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; the hidings of the Lord's countenance; the doubts and alarms that work in their minds whether their feet are upon the rock; the fear of death, and the prospect of eternity; the harassing darts of the Wicked One; inward guilt and grief on account of an idolatrous, adulterous, and backsliding nature—these are but a small portion of those sorrows that draw tears from the true pilgrim's eye. It is indeed a vale of tears for the Lord's family, a "valley of Baca," which they have to pass through to reach the heavenly Zion.

But the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." Here is the distinctive character of the true pilgrim. Not that he is journeying merely through the "valley of Baca;" not that his eyes are drowned in tears; not that his heart is filled with sorrows; not that his soul is cut with temptations; not that his mind is tried by suffering. But this is his distinctive feature—he "makes it a well." This the ungodly know nothing of; this the professing world, for the most part, are entirely unacquainted with; but this is the "secret which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen."

One feature of the "valley of Baca" was, that the burning sun above, and the parched ground beneath, at the time of year when the pilgrims travelled, made the whole valley arid and dry. But "they made it a well." There were wells dug in this valley of Baca for the pilgrims to slake their thirst at. And David, looking at these wells dug for the pilgrims, applies them spiritually to the refreshment that

the Lord's people meet with in their course Zionward. "Make it a well;" that is, there are from time to time sweet refreshments in this valley of tears; there are bubblings up of divine consolation; there are fountains of living waters, streams of heavenly pleasures. And when the sun-burnt, weary pilgrims, all parched and dry, are journeying through this valley, and their tongues cleave to the roof of their mouths with thirst, the Lord from time to time opens up in this valley a well; as we read, Isa. 41:17, 18, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Some manifestation of his gracious presence, some promise coming with power to the soul, some testimony of interest in the love and blood of Jesus, some smile from his countenance, some word from his lips, some encouraging testimony that the feet are upon the Rock, is given. This is a well at which his thirst is slaked; his parched tongue no longer cleaves to his palate; he drinks of the water that bubbles up from the thirsty soil to refresh the weary Pilgrim.

By this you may know whether you are a pilgrim Zionward. You all find this fallen world a vale of tears; you have burdens, sorrows, and afflictions of various kinds. But have you nothing more? If there be nothing more, are you a pilgrim? This is their distinctive feature—they "make it a well." What! no refreshments from the divine presence? no sweet encouragements from time to time in prayer? no blessing under the preached word? no melting of heart from a sense of the Lord's kindness to your soul? no glimpses and glances of a precious Jesus? no bubblings up of life and feeling to soften a hard heart? It will not do to call yourself a pilgrim merely because you have trials, and are journeying through a vale of tears. We must have something more than this to prove that we are pilgrims;

we must have wells—"a well of water," as the Lord speaks, "springing up into everlasting life"—divine refreshments, gracious manifestations, heavenly testimonies—something from God that comforts, that blesses, that waters the soul, and makes it like a watered garden. And is it not the vale of tears, the dry, the parched, the arid, the sun-burnt valley, that makes the well so acceptable? I remember a friend of mine telling me, that once journeying through one of the deserts in Asia, they came to a well; and the disappointment of the company when they found the well was dry, he said, no language could depict; their grief and trouble when, after hours' travelling, they came at night to encamp by the well, and found that the sun had dried it up, were indeed most acute. As therefore, none but pilgrims through the dry and parched valley could adequately feel the sweetness of the natural well; so none but spiritual pilgrims, afflicted, exercised, and harassed, can feel the sweetness of the "pure water of life" that the Lord at times refreshes the soul with.

When David therefore blesses the pilgrims, he does not bless them on account of their travelling through the "valley of Baca;" he does not bless them for the tears that fall from their eyes, for the sorrows that fill their hearts, for the afflictions and perplexities that they are tried with; but because they make it a well. Because it is not all darkness, but there is sometimes a ray of light; because it is not all despondency, but sometimes beams of hope; because it is not all unbelief, but sometimes the actings of faith; because it is not all temptations, trials, and afflictions, but sometimes the sweet refreshings and revivings of God's gracious presence.

III.—"*The rain also filleth the pools.*" It appears that there were "pools," or tanks, which were built for the use of the pilgrims as they journeyed through this valley. The wells of springing water were not their only resource; lest they should fail, there were tanks or pools constructed; and

these derived their supplies of water from the rain that fell into them. And may we not give this a spiritual interpretation? I think we justly may, without violating the mind and meaning of the Spirit. These pools, then, seem to represent what are called the means of grace, the ordinances of the Lord's house, and those various helps that God himself has appointed; but which are in themselves as desolate and dry as the pool or tank, and want the rain of heaven to fill them with sweet and refreshing water for the use of the weary pilgrims.

1. For instance—*prayer and supplication*, waiting upon the Lord, going to his footstool, begging him to appear on our behalf—this is a pool which the Lord has appointed. "Call unto me; I will answer thee." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "For all these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Here are pools; but do we not want the rain to fill them? What is prayer, unless the Lord inspire the petition? What is prayer, unless the Lord give an answer? I remember, many years ago, seeing in Canterbury Cathedral, the shrine of Thomas a Beckett; and—would you believe it?—the pavement is actually worn into hollows by the pilgrims who used to kneel there in the superstitious days of Popery. How many true prayers were offered at that idolatrous shrine? Prayers! Abominations in the sight of a holy God! Yet they could wear the pavement hollow with their knees. But have not you and I offered prayers equally unacceptable to the Lord God of hosts as the prayers that were offered at the shrine of Thomas a Beckett? Yes, thousands. But when "the rain filleth the pools," it is different. When the Lord draws, the soul runs; when the Lord inspires, the soul breathes; when the Lord smiles, the soul melts; when the Lord invites, the soul follows; when he says, "Call unto me," we come, beg, and pray. When "the rain filleth the

pools," we are like Hannah of old, who when she had poured out her heart before the Lord, and got the answer of peace from Eli's mouth, went her way and was no more sad; she had drunk a draught of the pool.

2. Are not God's *promises* pools? How they are strewed up and down God's word, like the pools or tanks in "the valley of Baca!" But have you not sometimes come to the promises, and found them as dry as the brooks spoken of in the 6th chapter of Job, which so disappointed the companies of Sheba. I read the promises—can they refresh my soul? I may come to the pool; but if the pool is dry, will coming to the dry pool refresh my parched palate? No. The rain must fill it. When the rain has filled the pool, I can then bow down, and slake my thirst. The rain of God's grace, and the dew of heaven, must drop into the promise, and fill the pool that you and I may come to it, feel a sweetness in it, and have our souls refreshed and strengthened by it.

3. And is not *preaching* a pool? Has not God appointed "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe?" But have not you and I often found it a dry pool? How many sermons have you heard during the past year that really blessed, comforted, and strengthened your soul? Has one in ten, one in twenty, one in a hundred, really brought a blessing into your heart by the power of God? How often these pools are dry! *I* find them so; *you* find them so, who know the difference between letter and spirit, between "bodily exercise which profiteth little," and the power of vital godliness that is profitable unto all things. The Lord will teach his people this; and he will teach it his ministers also. They may construct a pool: in their parlours at home they may build a very pretty tank; it may be divided and sub divided; a cell here, and a compartment there: and they may come with their pools to chapel; but unless the rain fill it from above, all their ingenuity will be thrown away, and they had better have left it high and dry at

home.

4. Are not *the ordinances* of God's house pools? And have we not had continual experience how barren, how dry these pools sometimes are? Have we not sometimes sat at the table of the Lord, and blasphemous thoughts, filthy imaginations, horrible workings filled our minds? Have we not felt carnality, deadness, bondage, darkness? no rain filling the pool? And have we not looked upon the baptismal pool, and though filled with rain from the roof, it never profited unless the rain from heaven filled the spiritual ordinance, as well as the rain from above has filled the natural baptistery.

So we might travel through the various means of grace which God has spoken of in his word; and we should find alike in all, that unless God fill the pools, they cannot slake our spiritual thirst.

But this is the blessedness of the pilgrims, that the rain does sometimes fill the pools. It is not with them all deadness in prayer, all coldness in reading, or all darkness in hearing. There are sometimes heavenly manifestations, diving refreshments, and breakings in of the Lord's presence and favour; this is the rain filling the pools. And when the rain fills the pools, then it is, and then only, that they afford any life or feeling to our souls.

IV.—"*They go from strength to strength.*" It is in the margin, "from company to company." I rather think, that the meaning implied is, "they go from halting place to halting place." There were certain fixed spots where the whole company rested at night; as we read, when the infant Jesus tarried in Jerusalem, his parents knew it not: they supposed that he was "in the company;" that is, had gone on with the travelling pilgrims: but when night came, and they looked for him, he was not there. (Luke 2:44.)

These halting places were certain spots where the caravan

of the travelling pilgrims rested at night; by these successive haltings their strength was recruited, and they were enabled to bear the long journey, rising in the morning refreshed with their night's rest.

The Psalmist viewing it spiritually, says, "They go from strength to strength." At each halting place they received fresh strength to pursue their journey onward. And is not this true in grace? There are halting places in the divine life, spots of rest, where the true pilgrims renew their strength. For instance; every manifestation of the Lord is a communication of divine strength, a recruiting place, where the soul renews its strength to travel onward. Every promise that comes with sweet power is another halting place where the traveller may rest. Every discovery of interest in Christ; every glimpse of the grace and glory of Jesus; every word from the Lord's lips; every smile from the Lord's face; every token for good; everything that encourages, supports, blesses, and comforts the soul, enabling it to go onwards towards its heavenly home—is a halting place, where the pilgrim rests, and where he recruits his weary limbs. And where can we rest, except where God rests? But does not God "rest in his love?" And can we rest anywhere short of God's love shed abroad in our heart? Does not God rest in his dear Son? Did not this voice come from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" All the satisfaction of God centres in Jesus; all the delight of the Father rests in the Son of his love. "Behold my servant; whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" (Isa. 42:1.) Can we then rest anywhere but where God rests? Is it not spiritually with us as with the Israelites of old? When the cloud tarried, they tarried; when the cloud went, they went; when the cloud moved onward they followed it; and when the cloud stopped, they halted, and rested beneath its shadow. What rest can I have in my troubles, afflictions, exercises, and temptations? Can I rest in *them*? I might just as well think of trying to rest myself on the

bottom of the Thames; I might just as well try to lie down on some deep slough, and there recline my weary bones. As to resting on doubts and fears, trials and temptations, griefs and sorrows, exercises and perplexities, the troubled bosom of the sea is as much a bed for the storm-tossed mariner, as exercises and troubles are for the weary pilgrim. I cannot, I must not rest short of that rest which "remaineth for the people of God." What is that? Christ—the true Sabbath. I can only rest in his finished work, in his atoning blood, in his dying love, in his imputed righteousness. He, and he only, can be the rest of my restless soul. And when I can do that, I am like the weary caravan of pilgrims travelling Zionward; they halted for the night; they sweetly slept, for the shadow of God's everlasting love was over them; and thus they recruited their strength for the next day's journey. But mark, they were not always resting. They had alternate journeynings by day, and restings by night; the thorns of the valley often lacerated their tender feet; the burning sun beat upon their aching heads; the wild beasts of the valley howled and shrieked through the bushes; banditti perhaps hovered upon the rocks, waiting to cut off a straggling passenger; the trackless wilderness was behind, the wild desert before, and Zion to them at a boundless distance. Yet on they journeyed, and never went back. They had a certain goal in view; Zion, Zion, their eyes were fixed upon; and the thought of reaching this cheered them as they went on.

Is it not so with spiritual pilgrims? Is it always rest with you? Are you always satisfied that you are a child of God? Are you always certain that heaven is your home? Can you always rest in God's love to your soul? Can you always find Christ precious to your heart? I cannot; if you can. We have to journey onward; another day of sorrow, another day of trial, another day of temptation, another day of exercise—each day bringing a new trial. Yet we journey onward; not driven from truth, not driven from Zion, not

driven from God, not driven from Jesus—onward, onward, onward we go; our faces set Zionward, our backs towards the world. These poor weary pilgrims would often march staggering and fainting on under their burdens, burnt by the rays of the sun, scarce able to move one foot before another. But the halting place is reached; the signal is given; they draw up on the sand; once more they rest, and their strength is recruited. It is so spiritually. God gives a little rest to the soul; some manifestation, some evidence, some testimony; a word, a look, a smile, a glimpse, a glance. "They go from strength to strength." Is not this strength? There is no other. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in *thee*." Therefore it is "from strength to strength." It must be God's strength he goes forward in, not his own. If it were his own, he would not come under the blessing; "whose strength is in *thee*." If he could rest when he would, eat when he would, drink when he would, he would not want the Lord to be the "strength of his heart and his portion for ever." This puts sweetness into the pilgrimage: "they go from strength to strength," from halting place to halting place, from refreshment to refreshment. For it was at these halting places the wells were dug; at these pools they tarried for the night, and sometimes found them filled with the rain of heaven. Thus they not only rested their weary limbs upon the desert, but they slaked their thirst at the well, or pool, and ate of the palm that overshadowed their head. And is it not so spiritually? Where we rest, there we find water, refreshment, and strength. We do not find the pool when we are journeying onward; but when we are weary, exhausted, and faint, the Lord opens rivers in the wilderness, and waters in the desert; and when we come there, we are allowed to tarry for a night, as the children of Israel encamped by the waters of Elim.

V.—And then, what comes as the glorious consequence? O sweet winding-up of this heavenly subject! O blessed crown that the Lord puts upon it all! "*Every one of them in*

Zion appeareth before God." None perished by the way, none were devoured by the wild beasts, none cut off by the wandering banditti, none fainted on the road; some perhaps, straggling in the rear, and others coming in late and lagged. But when the company is counted, none are missing; old men and young children, tender women and stout youth—all the company of the pilgrim caravan—when they are counted, one by one, all answer to their names. "Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

And is not this true spiritually of God's own family? What did the Lord say? "Those thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." And when he presents his innumerable host of redeemed souls before the throne of the Almighty, will not this be the language of his lips to his Father? "Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me." "Thine they were; for all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." And will not this be the theme of every spiritual pilgrim? "Kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." As the Lord is true, no spiritual pilgrim will ever fall and die in the valley of Baca. Some may fear that through temptation, their strong passions or boiling lusts will one day break out and destroy them. No, not if they are pilgrims. "Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Others may think they never shall have a testimony; they never shall read their name clearly in the Book of Life; the Lord will never appear in their heart or bless their soul; they never shall be able to say, "Abba, Father." If Jesus is theirs, they shall. But are they spiritual pilgrims? Do they find it a vale of tears? Are their faces Zionward? Have they come out of the world? Do they sometimes make the valley of Baca a well? And does the rain fill the pools? And have they ever had strength made perfect in weakness? Then every one of them will appear before God in Zion. Blessed end! Sweet accomplishment of the pilgrim's hopes, desires, and expectations! The crowning blessing of all that God has to

bestow! "Every one of them appeareth before God," washed in the Saviour's blood, clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No weeping then! The valley of Baca is passed, and tears wiped from off all faces. No thorns to lacerate the weary feet there; no prowling wild beasts to seize the unwary traveller there; no roving banditti to surprise stragglers there; no doubts and fears and cutting sorrows to grieve, perplex, and burden them there. Safe in Zion, safe in the Redeemer's bosom, safe in their Husband's arms, safe before the throne, every one of them appeareth before God in glory.

Pilgrim of Zion, take a glimpse at your spiritual life. Do see if you can find the features of the spiritual pilgrimage in it. How does it begin? "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." Is *your* strength in God? Have you learnt your weakness, feebleness, helplessness, hopelessness, and been enabled to cast anchor within the veil, and lean your weary soul upon the strength of Jesus? You are a blessed man; you have set out Zionward; your feet are in the road that leads to glory. How have you found the road? Very easy to your feet? A green, grassy, flowery garden? a smooth meadow, with primroses and violets in the hedges, and you every now and then sitting on a stile, inhaling the breath of the May morn? or sometimes reclining on the grass, listening to the nightingale? This is not the way to heaven; you have mistaken the road. The way to heaven is through "the valley of Baca!" the vale of tears—a dry, parched, and burnt up valley, with thorns lacerating the passenger's feet; the wild beasts lurking in the covert; and Satan and his host, as armed prowlers, seeking to destroy. Depend upon it, if we find the way very smooth, very easy, very pleasing, and very agreeable, we have made a grand mistake; we have not got into the right road yet. God bring those in the road who are his people, that have at present mistaken it!

But you, traveller and pilgrim Zionward, have you not found it a valley of tears, have you not had cutting things in providence, heavy trials, harassing temptations, fiery darts, persecutions, sufferings from men, and above all from yourselves? But have you not sometimes found a well open? Have you not sometimes found the Lord to be, what he says he is, "a Fountain of living waters?" And have you not sometimes come to the blessed Jesus all dry, all parched, all languid, and all sinking; and found some glimpses, glances, and testimonies? These have refreshed, strengthened, comforted, and blessed you. Then you are a pilgrim! though you have found the way that leads to Zion a vale of tears; yet in that tearful valley you have every now and then found a well. Then you are a pilgrim! Let the devil, let unbelief, let men, let persecutors, let the world, let your heart say to the contrary, God has blessed you in his word as a spiritual pilgrim.

And have you not found also that rain has filled the pools? It has not been always dry with you; it has not been always a barren land; there has been a melting, a softening, a breaking down, a something that has watered your heart; you have felt blessed from time to time under the preaching of the truth, in reading the word, in secret prayer, in the pouring out of your soul before God. You are a pilgrim!—another mark for you! And have you not sometimes found strength? You have had temptations, but you have had strength to bear them; you have had trials, but you have had grace to endure them; you have had persecutions, but you have had support under them; you have had heart-rending afflictions, but the Lord has not suffered you to be destroyed by them; there has been some secret strength communicated to your soul; you have leant upon an unseen arm, and have found support in invisible realities. Another mark that you are a pilgrim!

And then, sweetest, crowning mercy, that "every one"—(O

what there is in these words? doubting, fearing, tried, tempted, distressed, exercised, and sorrowing pilgrim)— "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." So that when the Redeemer counts his sheep, and they shall again pass under the hand of him that telleth them, not one of the ransomed will be missing, but all will be present to sing for ever the glory and praise of a Three-One God.