

The Necessity of the Valley - by Bob MacDonald

Last summer my wife and I went on a vacation to the Rocky Mountains. We had a wonderful time in God's magnificent creation. As we drove, we faced the usual ups and downs of mountain travel and would see a splendid mountain peak ahead that looked to be only a short trip away. We were excited to soon be on the heights and to see an even larger view of the surrounding mountains. Very shortly we found ourselves driving down a mountain side and into a valley. The valley caused us to look up to see the height and splendor of the mountain ahead. The valley almost seemed to be necessary to make the mountain heights more awesome and necessary before we could travel upward.

In our life as spiritual leaders in Christ's church, we will pass through valleys before we move onto the heights of what God has for us to be doing. It is helpful to recognize the "valley" times, what is happening in them and what we should do.

In the Bible, we see many of God's leaders going through this process of the valley. Consider Joseph in the land of Egypt. Joseph had fantastic prophetic dreams from God about sheaves of wheat bowing down before him and the sun, moon and 11 stars bowing before him. It was a true revelation from God that did come to pass in the future. However, what Joseph did not see at the time of the dreams were the necessary valleys required to get to that place. Those valleys included being sold by his brothers, being a slave in Egypt, being falsely accused and being in thrown in jail.

There are several tests we undergo in our times of the valley. God is testing us to purify our hearts. In the same way that a jeweler puts the fire onto the gold to make it more valuable by removing the impurities, even so God is as a "refiner's fire (Mal 3:3) to us. Our motives and attitudes are exposed so that we can repent of them. Our ways are revealed so we can align ourself with God. He is testing us to teach us new things about Himself, His Word and His ways so that we will be prepared for the next phase of our leadership. God tests us with the expectation that we will pass the test and move onto the new heights being fully prepared and equipped.

The devil is testing us in the valley. He is trying to get us to give up on our call to the ministry, to abandon doing things God's way and even to turn our backs on "so great a salvation" (Heb 2:3). During these testing times Satan often makes us offended at others for the way they have treated us. He will also try to make us offended at God by getting us to believe that God has somehow let us down or has been unfair to us. Satan tests us with the expectation that we will fail the testing of our faith. He is trying to get us off the course of God's will.

Our prophetic words are also testing us to see if we will continue to believe what God has said even though our circumstances seem to be going the opposite way of the prophetic word. Psalm 105:19 states, "Until the time that Joseph's word came, the word of the Lord tried him." We are often being tried by the prophetic word of the Lord spoken over our lives. These words are creative and so are seeking to bring about the necessary changes in us and our circumstances so we can see the fullness of God's declared good intentions for our future.

The question we often ask is, "How do I make it through the time of our valley?" Jesus guides the way as we see Him going through the valley in the Garden of Gethsemane. We see Jesus humbling Himself. The valley is the time to humble ourselves before God and participate with Him to make all the needed changes in our lives. We see Jesus choosing the Father's will over His own. The valley is a time to die to our ambitions and self-preservation tendencies and dedicate ourselves to His will. The valley is a time to drop all offences toward those who have hurt us and maligned us. It is time to work on a positive attitude. It is time to let go of the old ways and learn the new things God is preparing us to do.

The next time you are driving through the mountains - or even through some of the many valleys in the Prairies - remember that the valley of our experiences is like a gateway to the new heights that God has prepared for us to move into. Pass the tests in the valley and prepare to move to higher ground in your calling and ministry. In God's plan for us, the valleys seem to be necessary to go higher.