

# Finishing Well

Lesson #5

God Of The Hills & The Valleys

Feb. 2, 2022

First 3 gates = PRIORITY gates - Sheep, Fish and Old Gates.

- All the other gates cannot be effectively restored until these three are in place.

The next 2 gates, Valley Gate & Dung Gate, are the purifying gates of the refiner's fire:

- to test our character & purify us to outwork the purpose of God for our lives

After the old gate, we learned the importance of building a broad wall.

Ps. 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

Ps. 46:10-11 Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. <sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Notice there is a long distance between the old gate and the valley gate. It's as though the Lord allows a 'honeymoon' period where He teaches you and His presence is strong in your life. We should learn to walk with Him and trust Him in everything.

If we don't work on establishing a strong relationship with Him, we will not be able to stand and react obediently when the Valley Gate arrives.

Tower of the Ovens [Furnaces] precedes the "Refining Process"

Neh. 3:11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces.

Tower of the Ovens: The heat and pressure of the Christian life with various trials and tribulations will surely come.

It's VITAL for every Christian to KNOW: Hard times WILL come.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.

In this world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.

Message of the Valley Gate: Humility & Trials

Truth: There is abundant growth in the valleys, but not much growth on mountain tops.

Valley experiences are used by the Lord:

- For my personal growth = Spiritual Maturity
- Clear away the rubbish; my faith refined by the fire
- Produce fruit in my life

Proverbs 24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

Problem: Using my strength instead of His strength which is available to me!

Reasons we are anxious & panic: We don't have a solid belief in God's Word & promises. We do not understand God's ways. My response is based on emotion rather than truth.

- It is time to walk by faith. Act like the Word of God is true.

This is when our "mettle" is tested by fire. [tribulation, trials, fiery trials, etc.]

Five different Hebrew words are used to describe the character of a 'valley'.

1. A Low plain with distant mountains
  - Valley of Megiddo, the valley of Jezreel, 'the breadbasket of Israel'
2. Like the English valley where the mountains are a little bit closer
  - Valley of Jordan
3. Very deep valley
  - Valley of Hinnom, 'the waste-paper basket of Israel'
  - Place where "the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched"
4. A wadi: a riverbed where the water runs in the winter, but you don't see it in summer.
  - A guide says, "that was the river Kishon." You cannot see it; it is a riverbed.
5. The Shephelah: southwest of Jerusalem going down to the Philistine country where you would not know it was a valley at all.

Deut. 8:7 describes the Promised Land: For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

Deut. 11:11-12 But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven: A land which the LORD thy God cares for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

### *God Is The God Of The Hills And Valleys*

It was common in ancient pagan nations to perceive each god or goddess as having a particular domain or sphere of power on the earth. Baal, for example, was the god of fertility and weather. The god Baal Peor was a local deity whose range seems to have been confined to a certain geographical area. There were additional gods for the forests, the crops, the mountains, the seas, and the rivers. In this cultural framework, monotheism was unique, and the idea that any god was supreme in all areas was unheard of.

God's sovereign power is not limited or confined to any one location or sphere of influence. The Lord Almighty rules and reigns supreme over every place on earth— every hill, every valley. This expression originates from the narrative of 2 battles in I Kings 20 between Ben-hadad, King of Syria [Aram] and Ahab, King of Israel. [7<sup>th</sup> King of Northern Kingdom]

Context: Israel was just coming out three years of famine.

- Ben-hadad, King of Syria, decided to attack and take advantage of their plight.

Note #1: King David had defeated these northern nations [Syria in the older translations, Aram in newer ones], but these nations had gradually regained their independence.

Note #2: Assyria in the north was growing stronger. Ben-hadad wanted to control the trade routes through Israel because he had lost the northern routes to Assyria.

Note #3: He wanted to be sure Israel would provide men & weapons in case of an Assyrian invasion.

The Siege: I Kings 20:1-12 King Ben-Hadad will attack the city of Samaria in Israel.

And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were 32 kings with him, and horses, and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria and warred against it.

➤ The 32 "kings" who allied with Ben-hadad were the rulers of northern city states whose safety and prosperity depended a good deal on the strength of Syria.

Syria ultimately brought Ahab to the place of submission.

1. Benhadad demanded Ahab's wealth and family, and Ahab agreed.

I Kings 20:4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.

Ben-hadad planned to hold the family hostage just to make sure Ahab didn't back out of his agreement. Instead of Ahab calling for Elijah or another prophet and seeking the help of the Lord, he quickly capitulated.

2. Ben-hadad wasn't satisfied with this arrangement and wanted more.

In addition to taking the king's wealth and the royal family, Ben-hadad wanted to send officers to search all the royal buildings and take whatever they wanted! Agreeing with this request was much too humiliating for proud Ahab, so he and his advisers refused to accept it.

Ben-hadad received Ahab's message of refusal. When he received Ahab's message, Ben-hadad was probably drunk and feeling very brave, because he made an unwise decision.

He made an oath to grind Samaria to powder [I Kings 20:10], and he must live up to his boast.

To his credit, Ahab replied with a familiar proverb that could have applied to him as much as to Ben-hadad. It's the equivalent of, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch."

The promise: I Kings 20:13-21 In opposing Ben-hadad, Ahab had nothing to stand on, but God in His grace sent him a message of hope: the Lord would give Ahab the victory.

The Lord wasn't doing this because Ahab deserved it but because He wanted to honor His own name before the wavering king of Israel and his people. As He did on Mount Carmel, so Jehovah would do on the battlefield: He would demonstrate that He alone is God. [18:36-37]

I Kings 20:13-14 And, behold, there came a prophet [unnamed] unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude?

behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

To his credit, Ahab received the promise, asked for further instructions and obeyed God.

Following the example of Solomon [I Kings 4:7ff.], Ahab's father, Omri, had divided the kingdom of Israel into a number of political districts, each in the charge of a "provincial leader" who was also an army officer. The Lord selected these leaders to lead the attack against Syria, and Ahab was to lead the small army of 7,000 men.

They went out at noon, knowing that Benhadad and his officers would be eating and drinking and be in no condition to fight a battle.

- They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. 'Men are advancing from Samaria,' a scout reported.
- Ben-Hadad replied, 'If they have come out for peace, capture them.  
If they have come out for war, capture them.'
- King Ahab's tiny army, led by the young fighting men, fought hard and each beat his own opponent.
- The Syrians fled, with the Israelites in pursuit.
- Ben-Hadad managed to escape on horseback with some of his horsemen.

Because Ahab believed God's Word and acted upon it, God gave him a great victory. The Arameans [Syrians] are driven back. The siege is brought to an end.

Afterwards, the prophet of the Lord told the king, 'Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring King Ben-Hadad will attack you again.'

Because Samaria is in the hill country of Israel, the Arameans mistakenly believe that the God of Israel is only the god of the hills and not of the valleys or anywhere else.

Thinking Israel's ability to triumph was limited to higher terrain, they regroup and begin to strengthen their forces for an attack on the lower plains.

Prophet's prediction came true: The following spring, Ben-Hadad had gathered another army and was marching to fight King Ahab. The King of Syria had new battle tactics. He knew the Israelites were good at fighting in the hills so he wanted to battle with them on the plains.

I Kings 20:26-27 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. <sup>27</sup> And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

I Kings 20:28 And there came a man of God, and spoke unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Note: The enemy was not only challenging God's people, he was challenging God Himself!

This was the Mount Carmel contest all over again, and the Lord wouldn't let it go unchallenged.

Jehovah is the Lord of all the earth! He sent another man of God to assure Ahab of victory, but only because He wanted Ahab, the army of Israel, and the men of Syria to know that Jehovah alone is God.

For 7 days the two armies camped opposite each other, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day the battle began. King Ahab's army of Israelites inflicted 100,000 casualties on the Syrian foot soldiers in one day. The rest of Ben-Hadad's army escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on 27,000 of them.

I am King of Kings, Lord of All—of the mountains and the hills, the valleys and the pits, the oceans and the seas, the deserts and the rainforests. All. He is indeed God of the hills and the valleys. He is God of all Creation.

### The 5 'P's of Valley Experiences

#### 1. The Promise of Trials

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Wiersbe: Continuance is a proof of true faith in Jesus Christ. [John 8:31-32; Acts 2:42]

Paul made it clear that living the Christian life was not an easy thing and they would all have to expect trials and sufferings before they would see the Lord in glory.

I Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

When trouble comes, do you ask, "Why me, God? Why did You allow this?"

If a valley brings the glory of God into your life, can you give Him thanks for it?

Truth: The more you give God thanks, "*the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*"

#### 2. The Purpose of Trials

I Pet. 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

a. A valley can be used to chasten or correct us.

Heb. 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,

Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful [grievous]; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

b. A valley can be used to deal with our old nature. The flesh rises up!

God uses the valley, a difficulty, to bring us back to a place of humility before Him.

God seeks to throw the garbage, the rubbish, out of our lives.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

<sup>3</sup> Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

<sup>4</sup> But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Phillips Translation: When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, don't resent them as intruders. But welcome them as friends. Realize they come to test your faith to produce in you the quality of endurance.

Sequence: Various trials to test my faith > Produces endurance & perseverance = Maturity

c. The valley should yield increasing maturity. Affliction is an effective teacher.

Ps. 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your Word.

Sequence: Astray; Afflicted; Obeyed

Ps. 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes.

God's plan is that we be conformed to the image of His Son.

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.

God works on us in the valley. If God is bringing you to maturity, can you thank God for it?

d. The valley should cause us to seek Him, confess our sins and draw near to Him.

Heb. 12:13 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

e. The valley should add strength in the hard times.

Coaches in weightlifting teach that the muscles of the human body grow stronger when they are broken down. This breaking down comes through the hard, tough training of lifting.

Hard work, hard training, and hard study produce great results later.

Some scientists say that it takes 1,000 or more years for a diamond to form.

During that long time, it goes through intense heat, pressure, and difficulty.

Job was tested by God. In the end, with God's help, Job proved faithful, and was doubly rewarded. In our hard times, we can grow stronger, and receive a great reward from God if we hold steadfast and are thankful for the hard times.

Job 13:15a Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him:

Job 23:10-11 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

### 3. The Providence of Trials

a. Prepare for Future Task > Gen. 50:19-20 Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

We KNOW that all things work together for our good. However, what God is trying to accomplish is not always evident.

God kept His overall plan from Joseph so He could teach him needed lessons.

God wanted Joseph to have explicit faith in Him in ANY kind of circumstance.

b. A valley may bring a confirming testimony to your life for God's use later.

If you never experienced tribulation, how would you ever know "the God of all comfort?"

II Cor. 1:3-4 "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 tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." When you go through a valley while "giving thanks always for all things," people will see and take comfort from your reaction. They will see in you the God who carried you through.

Paul wrote Philippians while in a Roman prison. He'd suffered every conceivable hardship and heartache: shipwreck, beatings, mocking, persecution, hunger, thirst, and character assassination. Yet Paul said in Philippians 1:12:

"But...understand, brethren that the things which have happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel."

Why? It put the stamp of authenticity upon Paul's ministry. Paul said,

"I'm in prison. Thank You, Lord," because it extended the Gospel of Christ.

Some people say: "People are Christians just for what they can get out of it.

Put them in the frying pan — give them a little persecution — they'll fall away like flies."

That's exactly what the devil said to God about Job: "You've surrounded Job with all Your goodies. Take them away. He'll curse You to Your face." God said, "You don't know My servant, Job. He loves Me not for what I've done for him, but for who I am."

The life of Job — and Paul — shut the devil's mouth.

If your valley can be used to bring others to Jesus Christ, can you thank God for it?

#### 4. The Prize of Trials

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Wiersbe: The HOPE, confident expectation, of this GLORY should make suffering much lighter and bearable in comparison.

I Pet. 1:6-7 In THIS you greatly rejoice...What is THIS?

I Pet. 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a Living Hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I Pet. 1:6-7 In THIS you greatly rejoice though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

I John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, [KEY] that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

We all experience ups and downs in life, but we don't go through them alone.  
Throughout life's hills and valleys, God walks with us.  
Gen. 28:15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go..."

Although our circumstances change, God never changes.  
James 1:17 assures us that God "...does not change like shifting shadows."  
Malachi 3:6 God declares, I am the LORD, I do not change.

Truth: God will take you through places you don't understand just to bring you to the place where He wants you to be.  
When we know the meaning of God's sovereignty over the hills and valleys of our lives, we can rest with peace and even joy in all circumstances.