

Finishing Well

Lesson #1 Valley of Achor > Valley of Hope January 4, 2023

Circumstances beyond our control can leave us depressed and on the brink of despair. What will you do when trouble or heavy trials come? How will you confront health calamities? How are we to have joyful hearts in these dark days?

The Valley of Achor occurs for the first time in Joshua 7:26.

Joshua 7:1 "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan,...took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."

➤ 36 men died in the battle of Ai. The hearts of the people melted with fright.

Joshua 7:4-6 Joshua and the elders fell on their faces in abject despair, confession, and repentance before the Lord.

7:13 God threatened to remove His presence from His people until the matter was dealt with. When confronted with his sin, Achan confessed that he had greedily taken forbidden items during the conquest of Jericho.

Joshua 7:23-26 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

²⁴ And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

²⁵ And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day.

And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day.

So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger.

Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

Key Point: Once Achan's sin had been dealt with, the Lord turned from His anger, and the people were restored to His favor.

Joshua 8:1-2, 7b, 25 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed:

take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land: And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it. for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.

The valley of Achor speaks of the trouble that we bring upon ourselves by our own sins: retributive justice because of our departure from the Lord.

But if we judge ourselves before God and turn to Him in sincerity of heart, He will give deliverance, and even the valley of Achor will become an entrance into blessing.

God gives us a door of hope in the valley of trouble.

Exodus 14: The children of Israel were trapped in "a valley of trouble."

Ex. 14:5-9 Not long before that, Pharaoh had permitted the Israelites to leave Egypt, but then he changed his mind. Wanting to bring them back, he and his army chased after them. The Israelites were terrified when they saw the Egyptians approaching.

They were trapped at the shore of the Red Sea, with nowhere to go!

It looked as though Jehovah had deserted His people.

They must fall victims to their powerful and merciless foes.

These verses introduce the disappointing pattern of Israel's behavior during their march from Egypt to Canaan. As long as everything was going well, they usually obeyed the Lord and Moses and made progress. But if there was any trial or discomfort in their circumstances, they immediately began to complain to Moses and to the Lord and asked to go back to Egypt.

Ex. 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and

see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew to you today:

for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever.

- Moses gives in essence a prophecy of the drowning of the army of Egypt

Key Point #1: Fear Not: How is the heart to be established in peace in this circumstance?

Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed in Thee because He trusts in Thee.

Key Pt.#2:Stand Still: All attempts at self-help must end. All activities of the flesh must cease.

- Flesh may attempt to justify and sanctify its "help."
- They are the plain and positive fruits of unbelief which always shut out God.
- Flesh sees nothing but every dark cloud of its own creation.
- When you forget God's promises, you start to imagine the worst possible scenario.

Unbelief has a way of erasing from our memory all the demonstrations we've seen of God's great power and all the instances we know of God's faithfulness to His Word. [vv. 13-31].

Key Point: "Faith, on the contrary, raises the soul above the difficulty, straight to God Himself, and enables one to 'stand still.'

Every movement of the flesh is a positive hindrance to our perception and enjoyment of God's working on our behalf. When unbelief is driven from the scene, then God can enter.

Ex. 14:13 And see the salvation of the Lord.

Many commentators regard "stand still" as signifying that Israel was to remain passive until the waters of the Red Sea should be cleft asunder. But consider:

Notice the salvation had not taken place, but he told them to see it. How would one see something that has not taken place? *With eyes of faith*. They say seeing is believing, but God says believing is seeing - another one of the paradoxical principles of the Christian faith!

Unbelief creates or magnifies difficulties, and then sets us about removing them by our own bustling and fruitless actions, which do nothing but raise a dust around us which prevents our seeing God's salvation.

Heb. 11:29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land.

Key Point: Faith is the opposite of sight.

- Wrong conclusion that "see the salvation of the Lord" refers to physical sight.
- Was it spiritual sight to which Moses referred? The exercising of the eyes of the heart.

We need to have spiritual eyes to see and hearts to understand.

Our fallen flesh attempts to put a veil over our spiritual eyes so that we don't see grace.

The flesh does not like grace, for it can do absolutely nothing to earn it!

II Cor. 4:18 Faith is looking not at the things which are seen, but looking "at the things which are not seen" [strange paradox to the natural man]

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Heb. 11:27 Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible"—that is, seeing Him with the eyes of faith.

To "see the salvation of the Lord" we must first "stand still"—all fleshly activity must cease.

Ps. 46:10 Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Ex. 14:14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

God's "salvation" is to be seen by the eye of faith before it would be seen with the eye of sense. That "salvation" must first be revealed to and received by "the hearing of faith."

Ex. 14:15 And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?

 speak unto the children of Israel, that they Go Forward:

"Go forward" does not contradict but complements the "stand still." This is the spiritual order.

Key Point: We are not ready to "go forward" until we have first "stood still" and seen the salvation of the Lord.

- Before the command was given to "Go forward," there was first the promise, "see the salvation of the Lord which He will show "you today."

Faith must be based on the Divine promise. Obedience to the command must spring from the faith thus produced. Before we are ready to "go forward," faith must see that which is invisible, namely, the "salvation of the Lord" before it is actually wrought for us.

Adrian Rogers: Stand still and Go Forward! There is no contradiction here.

On the one hand, "Stand still." On the other hand, "Go forward."

We have to come to that place of rest and confidence, where, by faith, we see God in action. Then, we move in a way that we've never seen before.

Ex. 14:16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

Key Point #1: In The Darkness, God Provided Light To See

 God Gave A Boundary To His People To Guard Them

Ex. 14:19-20 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:
²⁰ And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel;
and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these:
so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Consider: God had become a wall of protection between His people and their enemies.

Sidenote: It was the 21st day of the month, 7 days after the full of the moon, when the Passover began, and therefore could have no benefit from the moon. ...

- God provided light by night to the Israelites.

Col. 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son:

Psalms 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Key Point #2 In The Depths, God Provided Land To Step

Ex. 14:21-22 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

- God's People Would Be Aware of His Might
- God's People Would Be Avoiding the Mire

Cried out to God Stood still Moved forward & their feet stepped upon a solid foundation
Path was made clear by the wall of water on either side

Psalms 40:1-2 I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock,
and established my goings.

Key Point #3 In The Difficulty, God Provided A Look To Scare
God Looked In A Fearful Way At The Persecutors

Ex. 14:24-25 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.

Key Point #4 God Looked In A Favorable Way At His People

Ex. 14:30-31 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. & Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: & the people feared the LORD, & believed the LORD, & His servant Moses.

- The Lord opened a door that extended all the way across the Red Sea!

Hosea's task was to illustrate the idolatry of Israel as spiritual adultery. [Hosea 1:2-9] He was instructed to marry a prostitute named Gomer, who subsequently bore him 3 children. Gomer left him for another man. Hosea had the humiliating responsibility of buying back his own wife. This was a vivid picture of what the people of Israel had done to their God by prostituting themselves to idols & committing "spiritual adultery."

Hosea's & Gomer's 3 children were given meaningful names selected by the Lord.

- Child #1 = Son = Jezreel = God scatters or God sows [Hosea 1:4]

Jezreel was a city associated with the drastic judgment that Jehu executed on the family of Ahab. [II Kings 9-10] Jehu was so zealous to purge the land of Ahab's evil descendants that he murdered far more people than the Lord commanded. He also murdered King Ahaziah of Judah and 42 of his relatives. [II Kings 9:27-10:14] God announced that He would avenge the innocent blood shed by Jehu. God would put an end to Jehu's dynasty in Israel which was fulfilled in 752 BC when Zechariah was assassinated, the great-great-grandson of Jehu and the last of his dynasty to reign. [II Kings 10:30] God also announced that the whole kingdom of Israel would come to an end with the defeat of her army, which occurred in 724 BC.

- Child #2 = Daughter = Lo-ruhamah = unpitied or not loved
God would withdraw His love and no longer show them mercy.

- Child #3 = Son = Lo-ammi = not my people

Like a man divorcing his wife and turning his back on her. Reflects the climax of Israel's fate.

But in the very next verse, the Lord gave them Hope For Restoration.

God's grace: He will one day change these names to reflect the nation's new relationship to God.

- Not my people will become My people.
- Unloved will become My loved one

Hosea 1:10-11 Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."

And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. [The centuries' old division will be healed.]

Instead of "Jezreel" being a place of slaughter and judgment, it will be a place of sowing. God will joyfully sow His people in their own land and cause them to prosper.

Today, the Jews are sown throughout the Gentile world [Zech. 10:9], but one day God will plant them in their own land and restore to them their glory.

The prophets described the Valley of Achor—a place once linked with sin, discipline, and death—as a place of promise.

Isaiah referred to the dry valley as the spot where herds will someday rest.

Isa. 65:10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

Hosea spoke of the valley as a future "door of hope" and a place for joyful singing.

Hosea 2:14-15 The loving Lord will restore His adulterous people, and they shall return to their God and fear Him.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. ¹⁵ And I will give her her vineyards from thence,

and the valley of Achor for a Door Of Hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Hope > Hebrew = *tiqwâ* a root word = "to wait or to look for with eager expectation."

➤ Waiting with steadfast endurance is an expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that God will decisively act for the salvation of His people.

➤ *Tiqwâ* = pictures a cord attached to the thing longed for

Sue Towne: In the midst of fear, the God of Israel is throwing the people a lifeline —

a door of hope. Jesus, your Redeemer, your King. Recognize He who called Himself "the door."

Take hold of the rope and let Him pull you to safety.

Jacob's Prophecies

1. Jacob's Prophecy Over ZEBULUN - Son #10

Gen. 49:13 Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon.

Gen. 30:20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; finally, my husband will acknowledge me as his wife, because I have borne him six sons."

So she named him Zebulun = dwelling or honor.

Key Pt #1 Upon entering the Promised Land: Judges 1:30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants... so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.

➤ INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE to God's CLEAR COMMAND to drive out all the inhabitants of the land [Num. 33:52].

Consider: Partial obedience is disobedience. Slow obedience is NO obedience.

Consider: Not responding fully to God's Word is a trait to which we all can relate.

How often do we choose to follow our own paths and not fully obey God?

From the beginning these unfaithful Jews suffered the problem of mixed marriages and the inevitable pagan influence resulting from the unequal yoke.

Key Pt. #2 Later, Zebulun returned to God and followed His commands.

a. Deborah & Barak praised the men of Zebulun for rallying to the cause and valiantly fighting Sisera. [Judges 4:6; 5:18]

b. Zebulun joined David at Hebron to transfer Saul's kingdom to David. [I Chron. 12:23, 33, 40]

c. Brave people whose warriors had excellent reputations; stable; trustworthy

Spiritual Application: Indirectly, Zebulun's history reminds us that God is always present when we return to Him. No matter how battered or bruised we may be or how ashamed we may feel about past transgressions, God can still use us.

Key Pt. #3 Zebulun will extend to the sea in the Millennium when his borders will extend as far as Sidon on the Mediterranean. [Ezek. 48:1-8; 23-27] Jacob's prophecy fulfilled! [Gen. 49:13]

2. Jacob's Prophecy Over NAPHTALI "My Wrestling" Son #6

Gen. 49:21 Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words.

a. The image is of one who springs forth with great speed and provides good news.

Deut. 33:23 Moses' Blessing: Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the Lord and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake.

b. Possessed the most fertile and productive land in all of Canaan.

c. They also failed to utterly drive out the Canaanites. They did force them to do labor.

d. Barak was from the tribe of Naphtali. [Judges 4:6-9] He was chosen by God to lead a military force of 10,000 of his tribe against the Canaanite oppressors. When the time came for action, Barak responded in fear and cowardice. He agreed to fight only if Deborah the judge would accompany him. She consents but she prophesies that the honor for the victory would go to a woman and not to Barak. This was fulfilled in Judges 4:17-22.

e. Later, Naphtali responded to Gideon's call to repel the Midianites and Amalekites from their encampment in the Jezreel Valley. [Judges 6:35] Naphtali followed Gideon into battle.

f. When David was to assume the throne, the tribe of Naphtali provided 1,000 officers, together with 37,000 men carrying shields and spears, along with a caravan of food, to help him. [I Chron. 12:34, 40]

g. The tribe of Naphtali had its ups and downs. Its history includes incomplete obedience and shades of cowardice, but it includes bravery under Gideon and a godly support of King David.

Lesson: Probably the greatest lesson is that God exalts the humble.

Naphtali, as part of Galilee, was despised.

Key Pt. #4 The portion of land given to Zebulun [lower] and Naphtali [upper] became known as "Galilee of the Gentiles," an area looked down on by the Judeans.

- God used the Assyrians to punish Israel for rebelling against Him.
- Since they could not travel through the Arabian Desert, the enemies came from the north and marched through Zebulun and Naphtali.
- Constant attacks caused destruction, decimation and death.
- Galilee, the most pagan of the Jewish provinces, had become diluted ethnically and spiritually when the Assyrians brought foreigners to live there.
- Noted for being the nest of revolution

Isaiah spoke of this area in Isaiah 9:1-2.

But [in the midst of judgment there is the promise and the certainty of the Lord's deliverance and] there shall be no gloom for Her Who Was In Anguish.

In the former time [the Lord] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the Latter Time He Will Make It Glorious, by the way of the Sea [of Galilee, the land] beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light; those who dwelt in the land of intense darkness and the shadow of death, upon them has the Light shined.

1. Her Who Was In Anguish: This refers to the lands occupied by the Northern Kingdom of Israel after the split in 931 BC.
2. Being most remote from Judah it was nearest to the foreign countries and so subject to heathen influences. Not only the location contributed to its disgrace, but it had been the first to tremble in awe before the might of Assyria.
3. These lands experienced gloom and anguish at the hands of the Assyrian invaders. Place of devastation!
4. Jews were removed from their homelands by the Assyrians [Gentiles] and were replaced with Assyrians and other non-Jews [Gentiles].
5. This set the stage for this area becoming a "melting pot" of Jews and Gentiles: hence, the name "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Isaiah's Prophecy:

1. Announcement: An age of peace is coming. It will begin with the coming of the Messiah [1st coming] who will be your Savior and future King.

Isa. 9: 6a For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:

2. God's prophetic promise:

- This land which was now experiencing gloom and anguish would not always be in darkness.

3. The people in the north who have suffered so much have the prospect of a wonderful new beginning.

4. "A great light has dawned on those in the land of the shadow of death."

"Light" [signifies prosperity, peace and joy] will shine on people who were walking in "darkness" [adversity, despair, gloom and evil].

5. Isaiah prophesied: In the past God humbled the land of Zebulun and Naphtali...but in the future, He will honor this area - Galilee.

6. This prediction is Messianic: Galilee would be honored as the first to hear Christ's preaching. This would more than compensate for their humiliation at the hands of the Assyrians centuries before.

Key Pt. #5 Initial Fulfillment Of Isaiah's Prophecy

Note: For thirty years Jesus had dwelt at Nazareth, in Zebulun.

Jesus — the son of David — began His ministry and His restoration at ground zero where God's covenant judgment had fallen seven centuries before.

Note: Matthew quotes Isaiah in conjunction with the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Matt. 4:12-17 Now when Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, He went into Galilee.

While in Galilee, He moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, and on those sitting in the region and the shadow of death a light has dawned.

From that time Jesus Began To Preach This Message:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

- Jesus' withdrawal to Galilee was no mistake. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. More proof Jesus is the Messiah.

Ray Ortlund: God came to His people first where they had suffered the most and from that place, He launched salvation for the world.

This despised district, despised even in New Testament times, was glorified when God honored it. The fulfillment of the prophecy occurred when Jesus Christ the Son of God dwelt in Capernaum.

The "light" first streamed forth in this quarter, Glorifying The Region On Which Contempt Had Long Been Poured.

It is in Galilee that people begin to see the Kingdom of God breaking into our world.

This light comes in the form of wonderful teachings, astounding miracles, compassionate healings, and authoritative commands that drive demonic influence from hapless victims.

Miracles included the healing of the centurion's servant, Simon's mother-in-law, exorcising the man with an unclean spirit and healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof.

Jesus walked on water, calmed the storm, taught from a boat on the Sea of Galilee and caused miraculous catches of fish.

MacArthur Just as Isaiah had predicted eight centuries earlier, the despised, sin-darkened, and rebellious Galileans were the first to glimpse the Messiah, the first to see the dawning of God's New Covenant! Not mighty and beautiful Jerusalem, the queen city of the Jews, but Galilee of the Gentiles would first hear Messiah's message. Not the learned, proud, and pure Jews of Jerusalem, but the mongrel, downcast, nontraditional mixed multitude of Samaria and Galilee had that great honor. To those who were neediest, and who were most likely to recognize their need, Jesus went first. The fact that Jesus began His ministry in Samaria and Galilee, rather than in Jerusalem and Judea, emphasizes the fact that His gospel of salvation was for the whole world.

As the new day of the Gospel dawned, the First Rays Of Light Shined In Galilee.

Recall: 1. Jacob's blessing on Naphtali: Beautiful words and good news.

2. Leah = wife not favored. Now my husband will Treat Me With Honor.

- Zebulun means dwell and honor.

While they deserved God's allowing them to be treated with contempt because of their unfaithfulness and their sins, they did not deserve the gracious promise of a Savior Who would minister powerfully where sin had previously abounded greatly.

Rom. 5:20b Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Such is the amazing grace of God!

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He brings to a darkened world grace and truth, and the sure promise of peace. When He began to minister in Galilee with His teachings and His miracles, He demonstrated that He was indeed this Messiah. His proclamation of the kingdom through salvation is what ends the despair. Believers in Him are not lost in gloom and despair.

Can you imagine the thoughts of the apostles when they heard Jesus' words in Matt. 16:21?

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." At first, these words seemed to dash all hope.

But He explained that He would go into the valley of trouble and emerge victorious - the ultimate Door of hope: the gateway of the Gospel!

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification.

Romans 5:1-6 lays out the clear progression of hope that proceeds from this saving work of Jesus Christ. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Our great Shepherd, the door of the sheep, is the door of hope in our valley of trouble.

We Know that What He Promised Will Come To Pass at His Second Coming.