

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem
#8 - Valley Gate - Part I

Notice there is a long distance between the old gate and the valley gate. It's as though the Lord allows a 'honeymoon' type period where He teaches you and His presence is strong in your life. The Old Gate and Valley Gate are connected by the long broad wall which provides the opportunities He gives us to walk with Him and learn to trust Him in everything. If we don't take advantage of this lengthy wall section by working on establishing a strong relationship with Him, we will not be able to stand and react obediently when the Valley Gate actually arrives.

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

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

John 16:33 Jesus said, "In this world you shall have tribulation, but take courage. I have overcome the world.

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

It is time to walk by faith (act like the Word of God is true).

This is when our "mettle" is tested by fire. (tribulations, trials, fiery trials, etc.)

Nehemiah 3:13 *Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits (5 football fields) of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.*

Message of the valley gate: Humility and Trials - valley type experiences used by the Lord for our personal growth. There is abundant growth in the valleys, but not much growth on mountain tops. The same is true of our spiritual life and walk.

Valleys are never a nice experience but *they should always produce fruit in our life.*

Nehemiah began his nocturnal investigation of the city's ruins at the Valley Gate.

Nehemiah 2:13 I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.

As Nehemiah went through the valley he would have had the best view of the walls and gates.

Spiritual Truth: We get the best understanding of the state of our spiritual walls and gates (our spiritual well being) from the valley experiences in our lives!

The Valley Gate led to two main valleys that defined Jerusalem geographically and historically.

1. The Hinnom Valley which was a place of evil atrocities for centuries.

a. Solomon erected high places for Molech in this valley to whom children were sacrificed by fire (2 Kings 16:3; 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31).

b. II Chron. 33:6 Manasseh made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom.

c. Josiah rendered the valley "ceremonially unclean" by spreading human bones over it. (2 Kings 23:10, 13-14).

d. Ketef Hinnom Amulets These two small silver scrolls have the priestly benediction Numbers 6:24-26 etched on them. They date to the First Temple Period (586 BC) and represent the earliest copy of Scripture we have. Discovered in Hinnom Valley > 1979

e. Because of its ceremonial defilement and its history of human sacrifice by fire, this valley came to be called "Ge Hinnom" or "Gehenna" (Greek).

f. After their return from the Babylonian exile, the Jews turned the Hinnom Valley into the city dump where garbage and anything deemed unclean (including the bodies of executed criminals) was incinerated. Although it was no longer used for evil worship, the constant, burning fire with its thick smoke and the filth, the valley remained a dark and dreary place.

g. By the time of Jesus Christ, the deep, constantly-burning Valley of Hinnom was also known as the Valley of Gehenna, or Hell, and had taken on a popular image as the place "down there" where the wicked would eventually be cast into the flames for destruction.

2. The Kidron Valley, "turbid, dusky, gloomy," is located along the eastern side of Jerusalem, between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. Important events of Bible History occurred here. Many tremendous events of Bible Prophecy will occur, in or very near here.

- To the south of the city the Kidron Valley joins the Valley Of Hinnom.
- Jesus Christ traveled through the Kidron Valley many times to and from Jerusalem.
- On His way to visit Lazarus at Bethany
- The Triumphal Entry in which He rode a donkey from the Mount of Olives to the city
- Crossing the valley from the "Last Supper" to the Garden of Gethsemane where He was arrested that Fateful Night. (John 18:1)
- The Pool of Gihon is located in the Kidron Valley.
- King David crossed the Kidron Valley to escape his rebellious son Absalom. II Sam. 15:23
- King Asa burned his grandmother's pagan Asherah pole in the Kidron Valley (1 Kings 15:13).
- The evil Athaliah was executed there (2 Kings 11:16).
- Pagan altars and images were burned during the cleansing of Jerusalem in this valley. (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4-12; 2 Chron.15:16; 29:16; 30:14)
- By the time of King Josiah, the Kidron Valley had become the city cemetery. (2 Kings 23:6, Jeremiah 26:23).

A valley in Scripture always represents humility and the judgment of conceit in our lives. John Stott calls humility "that rarest and fairest of Christian virtues."

If pride is the ultimate sin, then humility, its opposite, is the ultimate virtue.

Every Christian needs a valley gate, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5-6 Be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

Often God takes us from the mountain top experiences into deep valleys to teach us grace and humility. It is only as we yield to Christ that we can truly enter into the fullness of the life He has for us. Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example. He humbled Himself taking on the form of a servant, obedient to death. Therefore God exalted Him.

Scripture tells us: God resists us or pushes us away when we live in pride, an attitude of independence from God > Self-sufficient.

It is a most deceitful sin, well hidden to the person who lives in it.

Matt. 11:29 Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you will find rest to your soul."

When we humble ourselves to Him, His grace comes rushing into our lives.

The primary goal of believers > maintain a sense of humility before God so the Holy Spirit can conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

6 symptoms of pride

1. Becoming irritated when corrected > defensive and cannot accept you could be wrong or someone else could be right. Know anyone who can't take advice? > Valley Gate is waiting

2. Taking credit for things you don't control. For example, do you have a high IQ?

If so, you were born with that and shouldn't look down your nose at others.

Have talents or good looks? No cause to be proud of that > you had nothing to do with it.

3. Making excuses. Always have a reason why it really isn't true or isn't your fault.

4. Not seeking counsel. To not ask advice is a symptom of pride.

Prov. 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counsel is wise.

5. Bitterness over something God hasn't given you, or feeling you got a raw deal.

6. Unhealthy sense of competition. Some people accumulate more stuff than they can afford because of pride. They want to feel like they are in a class they are not in.

Proverbs 16:5a Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD.

Pride plunged the human race into sin. Pride was the bait on the hook for Eve.

The root of ALL sin is PRIDE. We need the valley gate to aid in the fight against pride.

Pride is not dead until YOU are!

Wise Counsel: Never turn your back on pride. Think you've got it whipped?

It will rise up and stab you in the back!

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.

1 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?"

Peter answers, "Calm down. Don't think something strange happened to you."

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

1 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; 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 Brethren, Count it as all blessing (joy), when you go through various trials.

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 weight lifting 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.

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.

1 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,

James 1:12 Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

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

e. The Purposing of Trials (don't quit)

1 Pet. 1:8-9 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

Rom. 5:4 Because we know that suffering produces PRESEVERANCE, perseverance, CHARACTER; and character, HOPE."

God's ultimate purpose in working everything together for my good is so I might "be conformed to the image of His Son." When I grasp the reality of the sovereignty of God in my daily circumstances, I will be able to say as Joseph did, "God planned it for good."

These things happen in the Valley - through trials that must be endured with Joy.

If I rebel or look for a quick and easy shortcut, circumstances can destroy me or rob me of the future God has planned for me.

If I seek the Lord with all my heart and desire His best, then circumstances will build me, strengthen me, and prepare me for what He has planned for me.

Phil. 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.