

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem  
#9 - Valley Gate (Purifying Gate) - Part II

Deut. 11:11 but the land which you cross over to possess *is a land of hills and valleys*, The children of Israel were told their inheritance would include hills and valleys. As believers, we also have a wonderful spiritual inheritance in Jesus Christ that we are to possess by faith. As we grow and mature in Christ, learn to humble ourselves before Him, present ourselves as empty vessels for His use and partake of our inheritance, the journey will include valleys and hills.

Heroes of the Bible endured valleys:

1. Isaac trembled because one of his sons had deceived and tricked him.
2. Jacob wrestled all night until he finally surrendered to the Lord.
3. Moses cried out to God, "I am not able to bear all this people alone...kill me, I pray thee."
4. David hid in a cave and wondered if the crown would ever be on his head.
5. Isa. 49:4 Isaiah lamented, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain!"
6. John the Baptist in prison sent his disciples to Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, or should we look for another?"
7. The Apostle Paul: "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."

Truth#1 : God ordains the valley.

You will NEVER learn on the mountaintop the lessons that are learned in the valley.

Question: What if there had been no valley?

1. Could David have written some of his wonderful Psalms if he had not known the valley?  
How could he have written, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," if he had never gone through the valley himself?
2. Suppose Jeremiah had not endured terrible valleys that made him the "Weeping Prophet"? Could he have written Lam. 3:22-23?  
"His compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."
3. Suppose Paul had never gone through the valley with his thorn in the flesh?  
Could he have written, "My grace is sufficient for thee"?

Truth: Many lessons are learned ONLY IN THE VALLEY!

Truth #2: God leads me through valleys so I will grow in "the nurture and admonition of Jesus Christ" in a way that I could never grow apart from the valley.

1. A man does not become patient simply by reading a book or praying a prayer. He becomes patient by going through the valley.
2. We learn how to pray in a valley.

3. Faith is cultivated in the darkness of the valley.
4. God may *teach* us in the light, but He *tests* us in the darkness.  
Paul wrote: "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."
5. The Christian graces are developed as we walk with Christ through the valley.
6. Experiences that result from valleys are like open doors that make it possible for us to enter a new aspect of our Christian walk.
7. Extremely difficult experiences are essential for the kind of maturity God wants to produce in me. There is blessing in my difficulties.

Truth #3 God knows how to balance my life.

1. "All sunshine makes a desert," says the old proverb. All hills, without valleys, will make an immature and shallow life.
2. If I want to enjoy the hilltops of happiness, I must be willing to experience the valleys of trial.
3. It is comforting and encouraging to know that at the end of every valley there is a hill, and atop that hill is a new experience of blessing from the Lord.  
You cannot have hills unless you have valleys.

Bible heroes had hills followed closely by a valley.

1. Abraham received a great promise from God one day.  
The next day the land was plunged into drought and famine.
2. Abraham's joy was complete when Isaac was born.  
A few years later, God told him to offer his beloved son on the altar.
3. Moses had no sooner led the nation out of Egypt when the complaints started and they wanted to go back into bondage!
4. Moses met God on the mountaintop and saw His glory. He returned to camp and discovered Israel dancing before a golden idol.
5. Jacob experienced a wonderful night with God that resulted in his becoming the new man, Israel. Fear gripped him when he saw the Esau and his 400 men approach him.

Truth: Great experiences do not guarantee constant faithfulness.

6. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Father spoke from heaven and the Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove. What a mountaintop experience! But then the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. What a valley to go through!
7. Jesus enters Gethsemane. He prays and sweats great drops of blood. See Him hanging on a cross! What a valley He endured!  
See Him risen from the dead--radiant in the glorified body! What a mountaintop experience!  
Then He ascends to the highest heaven and sits at the right hand of God!

## Individual Valleys

1. Valley of Discouragement - When we are tempted to give up, Satan attacks.
2. Valley of Discipline - When we fail the Lord and He deals with us, Satan attacks.
3. Valley of Decision - When we don't know which way to go, Satan attacks.
4. Valley of Defeat - When we give in to the flesh, Satan attacks.
5. Valley of Division - When family and friends turn upon us and separate from us, Satan attacks.
6. Valley of Death - When loved ones die, Satan attacks.

7. Valley of Doubt - When our faith begins to waver in light of problems, Satan attacks.

Ps. 77 - Asaph tells of moving from doubt and despair to confidence in the LORD.

a. Unable to sleep, he begins praying. It SEEMED that God had failed His people.

b. Then he concludes that God was being faithful to His covenant by chastening His people for their sins. The chastening was proof of God's love. Prov. 3:11-12

c. Asaph asks 6 questions which deal with the character and attributes of God.

1.) Has God rejected us? NO! He is faithful to His Word.

Lam. 3:31-33 For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

<sup>33</sup> For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

2.) Will He ever again show favor to Israel? YES!

Ps. 30:5 For His anger *is but for a moment*, His favor *is for life*;

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy *comes* in the morning.

3) Has His unfailing love vanished forever? NO!

Jer. 31:3 "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;

Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

4.) Have His promises failed? NO!

I Kings 8:56 There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.

5.) Has He forgotten to be gracious? NO!

Isa. 49:14-18 Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms *of My hands*;

Your walls *are* continually before Me.

6) Is He so angry, He has shut up His compassions? NO!

Lam. 3:22-24 *Through* the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. <sup>23</sup> *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

<sup>24</sup> "The LORD *is* my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"

Truth: Never doubt in the darkness what God has told us in the light.

No matter what His hand is doing in my life, His heart has not changed!

d. Asaph shakes himself out of pity into reality; place of decision - "I WILL" statements:

Ps. 77:10-12 *But I will remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High."

<sup>11</sup> I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

<sup>12</sup> I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.

e. The pronouns suddenly change from "I" and "my" to "Thee" and "Thou."

Truth: When I look at my circumstances, I focus on myself and see no hope.

When I look BY FAITH to the Lord, my circumstance may not change, but I CHANGE.

f. Asaph is able to move out of the shadow of doubt into confidence in the LORD.

Ps. 77:13-15 Asaph realizes that God's ways are always holy; He is a great God;

His purposes are always right.

g. Asaph looks back to Israel's exodus from Egypt for proof of the grace and power of God.

Question: Would God have bared His mighty arm to redeem Israel only for their destruction?

NO!

Would God have given His Only Son to die for us and not give us EVERYTHING we need? NO!

8. Valley of Disappointment - When we see the wicked do well and God's people have problems, Satan attacks. Personal crisis of faith

Ps. 73 -Asaph's question: Why do the righteous suffer & the ungodly prosper? This Psalm reveals a faith that is tested, restored and declared. The goal is to encourage us to NOT LOSE HEART in view of the temporary triumphs of evil, but trust God's power and purpose.

a. He assumes that affliction is inappropriate for the righteous and adversity is evil.

b. Psalm 73:2-3 *But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.*

<sup>3</sup> *For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

Asaph confesses that he almost lost his faith when he lost his eternal perspective.

He took his eyes off the Lord and focused on the wicked.

c. Ps. 73:2-14- How can God "bless" the wicked, while allowing the righteous to suffer?

How can adversity have a beneficial effect for the righteous?

d. Problem: Asaph lost his eternal perspective, focused on the wicked, started wallowing in self-pity and wondered if his devotion to God was really worth the effort.

Struggling With the Prosperity of the Wicked It's the end of the month and bills are due.

You're writing check after check; the balance is rapidly decreasing. Yet you still have a stack of bills to pay! You sigh in exasperation, wondering when you will ever be able to catch up. As you stare dejectedly at your meager balance, you think about a co-worker, a vain and profane man, with a mouth like a sewer. He could care less about God. He is unfaithful to his wife; ignores his children. He is consumed with sports and gambles constantly. Yet, he never seems to have a worry. He lives in a beautiful home, drives a fancy car and eats at the best places.

Your heart begins to fill with anger and envy. You feel like crying out, "Lord, I serve You faithfully, and all I ever seem to get in return is trouble. My co-worker is a complete reprobate, and he doesn't seem to have a worry. What's wrong? Am I spinning my wheels with You? Is my tithe a waste of my money? Is my faithfulness of no concern to You?"

e. Asaph's Irrational Conclusions While Wallowing in Self-Pity

Ps. 73:4-5, 12 *For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm.*

<sup>5</sup> *They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men.*

*Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.*

Asaph defined prosperity in material and physical terms. He started fantasizing about the rich; they are "always at ease," always increasing in wealth, never facing the problems of other people. He protested that the wicked had sleek and healthy bodies and were free from life's trials. All of which is utter nonsense.

f. He failed to recognize the Detrimental Effect of prosperity on the spiritual lives of the wicked: Ps. 73:6-8

*Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment.*

<sup>7</sup> *Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish.*

<sup>8</sup> *They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily.*

Prosperity made them more greedy, violent and oppressive.

Ps. 73:9-11 *They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them.*

<sup>11</sup> *And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"*

Rather than bringing men closer to God, affluence made men more independent and ungrateful. Prosperity led to spiritual complacency and blasphemous pride.

g. Asaph's Sin - It was during this fantasizing Asaph committed a grievous sin against God. He blasphemed the love and faithfulness of God by exclaiming:

Ps. 73:13-14 *"Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning."*

h. Asaph's Turning Point -With his spirit in turmoil and wrestling with monstrous doubt, Asaph was on the verge of losing his faith. The wrestling continued until... Ps. 73:17

*"Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end (the end of the wicked.)"*

He was reminded in Ps. 73:18-19 (1) God has set the wicked in "slippery places."

(2) God cast them down to destruction- at any moment, being swept away by "sudden terror."

Life is very tentative - here one moment and gone the next.

He began to consider the spiritual dimension of life as opposed to the physical aspects.

When he worshipped God,

(1) Asaph came to understand the blessing adversity had been in his life.

(2) On the other hand he was able to see that affluence had been detrimental to the wicked.

i. Asaph's Perspective Restored -Once his eternal perspective was restored, he concluded that he was as "senseless and ignorant" as a beast.

Ps.73:21-22 *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind.*

<sup>22</sup> *I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.*

j. The Advantages of Affliction (vv. 23-28)

*Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.*

<sup>24</sup> *You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.*

<sup>25</sup> *Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.*

<sup>26</sup> *My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

*For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. <sup>28</sup> But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.*

1. His affliction, while unpleasant, had a beneficial effect of drawing him closer to God.
2. His initial reaction of bitterness and complaint erupted in worship and praise.
3. Rather than dwelling on what material things he lacked, he delighted in the greatest blessing of all - having God as in intimate counselor and guide, a present and a future source of comfort and security.

k. Solution to his spiritual agony was the restoration of his eternal perspective. This life is fleeting and a day of judgment is coming. He may never see justice in this life, but one day justice will prevail. He realized that he had been called to live by faith and not by sight.

Biblical Truth: *It is in our adversity, in our affliction, that our weakness is apparent, and our need for grace is most obvious. God's grace not only sustains us in our suffering, it draws us much nearer to God. We not only enter into a deeper level of intimacy with God in our suffering, we also are assured of entering eternally into God's presence when we die:* This is why Asaph was able to say with confidence that although suffering may be his portion in life—his "flesh and his heart may fail"—nevertheless, God will be sufficient for his every need (v. 26). God was in the present, and He would be in the future, Asaph's "refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

God's word of encouragement as you go through the valley: The Lord Jesus Christ has already gone before you to prepare the way. Every valley that you go through, Christ has already traveled before you. Every day presents a new challenge to grow in grace, a new opportunity to help others, a new privilege to receive grace and strength from Jesus Christ. It is a land of hills and valleys, and our God is the God of the hills and the God of the valleys.