

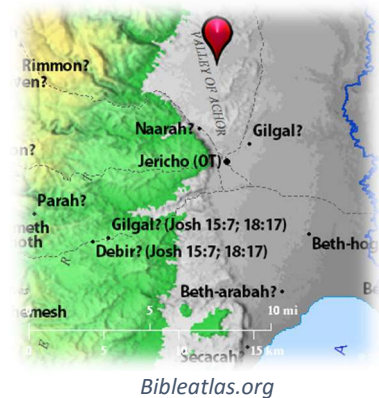
The Valley of Trouble: A Door of Hope

Hosea 2:15

What will you do when trouble comes? There are consequences of our choices that bring us to the point of despair. There are circumstances beyond our control that leave us in darkness. The sinful choices of others can dog our paths for years to come. Acts of disobedience may lead to decades of heartache, as they did for King David. What will you do when this kind of trouble descends upon you? Where is the light? Where is the hope when you find yourself in deep trouble?

In Hosea 2:15, we have a life-changing answer to these questions: **“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.”**

Consider this phrase: **“I will give . . .the valley of Achor for a door of hope.”** Let’s begin with the end in mind: **“a door of hope.”** “Hope” from the Hebrew word [*tiqwâ*] comes from a root word that means, “to wait or to look for with eager expectation . . . Waiting with steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that God will decisively act for the salvation of his people.”ⁱ “A door” refers to an opening or a doorway. This is wonderful news from God, yet it is puzzling. Why? It’s puzzling because He gives “the valley of Achor” for a door of hope. What is meant by the valley of Achor?



Let’s turn back to Joshua chapter 7 to answer this question. The expression occurs for the first time in Scripture in the last phrase of verse 26. Why is it called, “the valley of Achor?” Joshua 7:1 explains, **“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”** When Achan was confronted with his sin, he confessed that he had coveted and taken forbidden items during the conquest of Jericho. God’s anger burned against Israel. As a result, thirty-six men died in a small skirmish with the city of Ai (Joshua 7:5). God also threatened to remove His presence from His people until the matter was dealt with (Joshua 7:13). The name “Achan” means “trouble.” His crime and his family’s crime (being complicit with him) were judged to be worthy of death. Achan was stoned to death and burned with all of his family, his cattle and his tent (Joshua 7:24-27). Verse 28 records that they piled up a heap of stones as a memorial, and they named the entire area “the Valley of Achor.” This is the valley that leads from the plain of the river Jordan into the foothills of Canaan. Joshua 15:7 identifies this valley as part of the border of Judah.

Illustrations of the Door of Hope

In the message this evening, we would like to give a little more attention to the context in which this promise occurs. For now, it will suffice to consider the grandeur of this door of hope, for Israel **“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.”** In other words, this prophecy of hope is connected to the greatest events in the history of Israel. As we

shall see, this beautiful illustration “The Valley of Achor, a door of hope,” can be found throughout the Scriptures.

Look for the great potential of your great troubles. Near the southern tip of Africa lies “the Cape of Good Hope.” But on March 12, 1488, when the Portuguese explorer, Bartolomeu Dias, reached the cape, he called it “The Cape of Storms.” This is near the point where the cold currents of the Atlantic meet with warm currents of the Indian Ocean. It is known for the turbulent condition of the winds and the waves. But when European explorers began to recognize the potential of this new trade route, they changed the name. King John II of Portugal changed the name to “Cape of Good Hope.” Look for the great potential of your great troubles.

Where do we see this principle of “A valley of trouble: a door of hope” in the Scriptures?

Genesis: Through man’s disobedience, the Garden of Eden became the first “Valley of Achor.” And in man’s greatest trouble, the Lord predicted the great door of hope in Genesis 3:15. God promised to send the Seed of the woman (the Messiah) to crush the cursed work of the serpent. (This grace applied caused Joseph to testify in Genesis 41:51-52, that God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction.)

Revelation: In the ultimate “valley of trouble” near the end of the Bible, we find the words of Revelation 20:14-15: **“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”** Note the door of hope in this tragic passage. It is the reference to “the Book of Life.” And Revelation 21 begins with a reference to the new heaven and the new earth.

Exodus: In Exodus 2:23-24, the people groaned in slavery under the Egyptians, and the Lord heard them. In Exodus 14, the children of Israel stood on the shore of the Red Sea as the Egyptians pursued them. Here is “a valley of trouble” if ever there was one. But Moses commanded, **“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”** (Exodus 14:13-14)

Leviticus: In Leviticus 6:6-7, any Israelite who recognized his guilt could bring a trespass offering before the Lord. And he received the promise, **“and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.”** Here is the door of hope for every sinner.

Numbers: In Numbers 14:1-21, the negative reports of the 10 spies caused the people to despair and rebel. It was a dark day for the people of Israel, but the Lord prophesied, **“as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”** In that valley of trouble, the Lord opened a way to hope.

Deuteronomy: In the end of Deuteronomy, there are chapters of cursing and chapters of blessing. This is summarized in Deuteronomy 30:15, **“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;”**

Joshua: Joshua 7 explains the name of the Valley of Achor and how the people turned from trouble to triumph over their enemies, and enter the Promised Land.

Judges: Throughout this book, the people groaned under their captors and were delivered. And never forget Samson. Judges 16:22 records that as a blinded captive of the Philistines, **“the hair of his head began to grow again”** and he won his greatest victory over the enemy.

Ruth: Naomi and Ruth in Moab were in the valley of trouble. But the Lord brought them back to the door of hope in Bethlehem – where the ultimate Door of Hope would be born!

1 Samuel and 2 Samuel: In 1 Samuel 4, the daughter-in-law of Eli named her son “Ichabod” “the glory has departed” for the ark of God had been captured. But in chapter 6, the Lord brought back the ark, and Samuel began to judge Israel. 2 Samuel begins with “the death of Saul” (a valley of trouble for Israel) but describes “a door of hope” when David became king.

1 King, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and 2 Chronicles could be summarized with the “ups and downs” of valleys of trouble and doors of hope. But the Messianic line was preserved through the centuries.

Ezra and Nehemiah: Faced their valleys of trouble with a continual appeal for faith and hope.

Esther: Queen Esther determined to stand before the king to appeal for her people. She said, **“If I perish, I perish”** (Esther 4:16). But in chapter 5 through 7, Esther was vindicated and Haman was hung.

The Wisdom Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon: These books are replete with valleys of trouble and doors of hope. When wickedness seemed ready to win, wisdom triumphed through hope in God. In the shadow of the valley of death, you will fear no evil, for there is a door of hope – **“Thou art with me!”** (Psalm 23).

The Major and Minor prophets portray many deep valleys of dark trouble with glorious prophecies of a door of hope. For instance, in the Messianic “Servant Song” of Isaiah 50, we see the coming torture of the Messiah. But consider how this prediction of the coming Messiah was applied: **“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God”** (Isaiah 50:10). Here is yet another “valley of the shadow of death,” (a valley of trouble) with the appeal to wait for the door of hope. Isaiah 65:10 prophesies that the Valley of Achor will be a place of blessing.

The Gospels: Can you just imagine what went through the minds of the apostles when they heard Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 16? Verse 21 records, **“From that time forth began Jesus to shew 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.”** That may be one of the greatest verses in the Bible to demonstrate a valley of trouble and a door of hope. Jesus described His death, burial and resurrection. Here is Gospel hope.

The Gospel of Christ

In Romans 5, we find the clear progression of hope that proceeds from the saving work of Jesus Christ. **“1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed;**

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:1-8). Here is our great door of hope in the valley of trouble. Our great Shepherd, the door of the sheep, is the door of hope in our valley of trouble.

Author Dorothy Sayers described the great conflict in Scripture as “the drama in the dogma.” She used that phrase to emphasize the need for clear Biblical, doctrinal teaching. For without that, we would never see the great drama in the Scriptures. Rightly understood, the stories in the Bible keep us on the edge of our chairs. They reveal how grace triumphs in conflict after conflict. We find doors of hope in valleys of trouble. All these stories lead us to a change of heart.

Finding the Door of Hope

Hosea made his proclamations to a nation in spiritual adultery. Our own nation is like that nation. And there is deep trouble ahead. But in the midst of our troubles, we know **“where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”** (Romans 5:20). As believers, **“we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28). We know where to find the door of hope in our valley of trouble. The people entered the Promised Land, they did not camp out by the pile of stones in Achor. Don’t dwell on your sorrows, look up for the door of hope.

The proclamations made to Israel still make good preaching to each of us as individuals today. About Hosea 2:15, Alexander MacLaren wrote, *“But the promise, like all God’s promises, has its well-defined conditions. Achan has to be killed and put safe out of the way first, or no shining Hope will stand out against the black walls of the defile. The tastes which knit us to the perishable world, the yearnings for Babylonish garments and wedges of gold, must be coerced and subdued. Swift, sharp, unrelenting justice must be done on the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, if our trials are ever to become doors of hope. There is no natural tendency in the mere fact of sorrow and pain to make God’s love more discernible, or to make our hope any firmer. All depends on how we use the trial, or as I say—first stone Achan, and then hope!”*ⁱⁱ Dr. MacLaren stressed that lusts and coveting must be dealt with to find the door of hope. Jesus said of the temple, **“My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves”** (Luke 2:46). Don’t let the appetites of Achan leave you in the Valley of Trouble. Confession and repentance will bring you to the door of hope. **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”** (Proverbs 28:13).

Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio

ⁱ John E. Hartley, “1994 אָחָר,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 791.

ⁱⁱ Alexander MacLaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture: Hosea 2 “The Valley of Achor.”* Accessed at <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/hosea-2.html>