

Valley of Trouble, Door of Hope

Joe Slater

The name Achan means “troubler.” The man Achan in Joshua 7 certainly lived up to that name. God had plainly commanded that Israel take no spoil from Jericho. The city would be utterly destroyed. Anything that wouldn’t burn was to be devoted to the Lord.

When Achan secretly hid a fine imported garment and some silver and gold, God withdrew His protection from Israel. What should have been an easy victory for them at Ai turned into a disastrous rout!

Once Joshua learned what Achan had done, he took immediate steps to deal with him. “*Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day! So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they stoned them with stones*” (Joshua 7:25). The place became known as the Valley of **Achor** (from the same root as **Achan** – Valley of **Trouble**).

With the issue resolved, God restored His favor to Israel. In their conquest of Canaan He gave them victory after victory.

Centuries later, Israel had become disloyal to God, forgetting Him and worshiping idols. As punishment, the Lord allowed the Assyrians and Babylonians to take His people captive. Their exile was reminiscent of their ancestors’ bondage in Egypt. Fortunately, the Lord did not give up on His people. As He had delivered their ancestors from Egypt, so he would deliver a faithful remnant from captivity. “*I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. . . For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more*” (Hosea 2:14, 17).

As he had blessed their ancestors in the conquest of Canaan after they dealt with Achan, so He would “*give her vineyards from there, and the Valley of **Achor** as a door of hope. She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt*” (Hosea 2:15).

Even today, God seeks the salvation of all people (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Our sin puts us into a state of **trouble** (bondage, John 8:34). Fortunately for us, Jesus bled and died to atone for our sins. As we turn from sin and submit to God in trusting obedience, our Valley of **Achor** (trouble) becomes a door of hope. “*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

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Leave None The Same

O Lord, our God, Defender and Shield,
Giver of growth and seed for the field,
Yours is the praise, the glory and power,
The weak and weary run to your tower.
Hear now, O God, our fervent prayer,
Confessing need, our hearts laid bare:
Come fill our souls, remove our shame,
Make firm our faith, leave none the same
While we for heaven’s home prepare;
In us, O Lord, glorify your Name.

J. Randal Matheny (via believingprayer.com)

CATTLE ON TWO LEGS

In the late 1970s, Chery and I lived in Guthrie, Oklahoma. We still get the bulletin from the church in Guthrie. There is farming around Guthrie, but mostly it is cattle country. Recently their bulletin carried an interesting observation about cattle.

The cattle graze seven days per week. They look after their own interests, and the welfare of their young, every day. That is their life. They do what they want to do every day of the week, including Sunday. The writer then asked, “Are we created to live like the animals, or are we created to serve the God who gives us life?”

One cannot expect more of cattle. By living as they do, they are serving their purpose in creation. That is their role. They were not given the ability to compose songs of praise. They were not granted the ability to study God’s word, nor the ability to affirm or proclaim it. They are not capable of looking up to their creator and giving thanks in a direct and intentional fashion. The most we can ask of the cattle is that they be good cattle.

Is that all we ask of ourselves?

Do we recognize that we were created for a higher purpose? Do we realize that we are the people God formed to declare his praise (Isaiah 43:21)? Do we live as those who wish to give glory to our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16)? Is our end goal the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:10-11)? Is His glory considered in everything we say and do (1 Peter 4:10-11)? Or are we nothing more than cattle on two legs? Are we nothing more than dumb beasts who eat and sleep, and eat and sleep, and eat and sleep, day after day until life is over?

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)