

Motivation

- From Frustration to Joy!

To understand Scripture one must realize that "*literal*" interpretation and "*spiritual*" interpretation run side by side throughout the Word of God.

For instances:

(1) DEATH AND RESURRECTION

There, of course, will be a literal a death and a literal resurrection. however, Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 teach that there is a "*spiritual*" meaning to death and resurrection. These passages teach that the believer is to be "*spiritually*" dead to self and resurrected from a sinful state to a new divine life in Christ Jesus.

(2) WITH CHRIST IN THE HEAVENLIES

The believer will someday be "*literally*" with Christ in the heavenlies, however, Ephesians 2:1-6 teaches that he can - in the spirit world - **NOW** in this life [*spiritually*] rule and reign with Christ in the heavenlies."

(3) REDEMPTION OF THE BODIES

Romans 8:21-22 teaches that, not only will the believer someday be "*literally*" redeemed from the curse, the believer can **NOW**, in a "*spiritual*" sense, be redeemed and, in Jesus' name, claim what is rightfully his.

THERE IS A SPIRITUAL MEANING AND A LITERAL MEANING OF SCRIPTURE!

Thus, it is so with the subject of "*the kingdom of God,*" there is a "*literal*" kingdom which Christ will set up on earth in the future, however, there is **NOW** a "*spiritual*" kingdom, often over looked by the child of God, which God desires to set up in the believer's life.

Many believers only know about salvation as taught in John 3:16 and, of course, this is important to those who have not believed in Jesus Christ, however, once one has accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, he must realize what it means to live in the kingdom of God.

God's plan for the believer in his Christian walk is not a "*do-it-yourself*" kit. The Christian walk is not accomplished by sheer determination on the part of the believer - a tightening of his muscles, gritting his teeth and saying, "*Tomorrow I am going to do better!*"

The Christian Walk takes Motivation!

What is "*Motivation*"? Teen-ages, often, do not want to go to college, so what do you do to *motivate* them? You may entice them with the "*millions*" they will make, providing they acquire a proper education. You might describe the life of the athlete they could have. If none of this is successful, you might begin to threaten by some punishment or maybe a trip to the "*head-shrinker*." What are you doing? You are trying to "*motivate*" them to go to collage.

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING TO MOTIVATE THE BELIEVER TO HOLY LIVING

The believer needs "*motivation*" to drive him to a closer walk with God. When the world around him is cheating, lying and double dealing, the believer must have something to "*motivate*" him from *within*.

What motivated the Apostle Paul? He was beaten, flogged, lashed, stoned and left for dead, but he had something called, "*resiliency*" - [power to bounce back]!

"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken! We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit! We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going" - 2 Corinthians 4:8-9.

IS "*HEAVEN MOTIVATION*" ENOUGH?

Believers speak of heaven and sing, "*Tell mother I'll be there*," however, when they get sick and have their chance to go to heaven, what do they do? They call for a doctor to do everything he can to "*keep them here in this life*."

If the believer is to have a resiliency in his Christian walk, a driving force to a life of holiness, he must have an understanding of what the "*kingdom of God*." really is. He must lay hold of this truth and sink his teeth into it. It will uphold him and drive him to a joyful, victorious, Christian life!

As one studies the Scriptures, he will find that every book of the New Testament *throbs* with the truth of "*God's Kingdom*." God's kingdom is the grand climax of every author of the New Testament! The crescendo of every orchestra within the New Testament is "*kingdom of God*."

Let's take, for instance, Romans and look at the last verses:
Paul is finishing this grand letter to the Romans and he says:

*"Now to Him who is **able to establish you** by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, **according to the revelation of the mystery** hidden for long ages past, but **NOW revealed** and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and **obey** Him - to the only wise and God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen" [Romans 16:25-26].*

The most important word here is "**obey**" [or "*obedience*," as the King James translation renders it]. The "*mystery*" of God's kingdom is based upon *obeying* God!

Our greatest regret in heaven will be that we were not obedient to God's will!

How many times the church has been guilty of trying to *bribe* people with heaven - and "*black mail*" them with hell - in an attempt to get them to live right before God? God forgive us because too often the church has been like a parent telling it's child, "*If you don't eat your spinach, I will spank you.*" Our motivation in living for God should not be just "*heaven*" but, rather, it should be the "**kingdom of heaven!**"

Reading Matthew 13, where the seven "*kingdom*" parables are found, it is easy to see, that Jesus teaches that the "*kingdom of heaven*," is likened unto . . . **NOT** heaven, our eternal home . . . but rather it is letting God rule in our lives here and now in this life on earth!

Jesus teaches in Mark 4:26, "*This is what the kingdom of God is like . . .*" and then He tells of a man who plants seed in the earth and lets it grow. In verse 30, He ends the parable by stating, "*What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?*" Christ speaks of something taking place **NOW**, not something that will take place in our future heaven.

In John 11, Lazarus dies [verse 14], and Martha says to Jesus, "*If You had been here, my brother would not have died*" [verse 24]. Martha is speaking of **the past**, then, in verse 24 Martha says, "*I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*" Here, Martha is speaking of **the future!**

What Jesus wanted Martha to realize was that He was at work, not in the past, nor in the future, but, rather, He works in **the present!** Christ desire to rule *today*, right now!

Jesus said to Martha, "*If you believed, you would see the glory of God . . .*" not just in the past, or in the future, but right **NOW** in this life on earth!

The danger is for believers to live in the **PAST**, or in the **FUTURE** and, thus, be robbed of the "**joy of the PRESENT!**"

How many have rejected the gospel, simply because it was presented as a kind of "*pie-in-the-sky*" that will take place some day in the future and has no real relevancy to everyday living - **NOW?**

WHAT IS GOD DOING FOR YOU NOW?

Of course, we should thank and praise God for the glorious past, and the precious promises of the future, but what about right **now?** Believers need something more than sheer will power in living for God in this present life. What was contained in the Scriptures that motivated believers to Godly living?

In Luke 9:1-2, Jesus calls His twelve disciples and gives them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases and to preach "**the kingdom of God.**" In chapter 10, Jesus

appoints seventy and sends them out two by two. In verse 9, they are to "*heal the sick and say unto them, **the kingdom of God** is come nigh unto you.*"

What does this mean?

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus said, "*If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then **the kingdom of God** is come unto you.*" - What does this mean?

It means simply that where Christ Jesus is ruling and reigning . . . where His power and authority is prevailing . . . **there** God's kingdom is!

Jesus, in the Sermon-on-the-Mount, teaches the believer to "*seek first **the kingdom of God**, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.*" Jesus, speaking of eating, drinking and clothing . . . the necessities of life . . . says, these things will be added unto the believer, if he seeks first the kingdom of God.

Can this possibly mean, "*Do the best you can to live for God and, when you die, Christ will take you to heaven?*" **NO!** This idea comes from a confusion of what "*heaven*" and "**the kingdom of heaven**" are. They are **not** the same thing!

The Jewish person would not use the word "*God*" because they feared that they would break the commandment which stated, "*Thou shalt not use the name of the Lord thy God **in vain**.*" Their solution to keeping this commandment was to not use the name of God at all. Therefore, Jesus, in order to speak to these Jews, often referred to "*the kingdom of **heaven***" instead of "*the kingdom of **God***," however, the student will find that these two terms are used interchangeable in the Scriptures.

What did Christ mean when He said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto?*" Christ was saying, "**Let God rule over you, that is, pursue His kingdom with all your heart and He will take care of all the earthly things of this life. Make your number one project in life to have God rule as King!**"

If God's purpose for the believer was just to take him to *heaven*, then God could have arranged that the moment he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, however, God left believers in the world for a reason and that reason was to establish a *spiritual* kingdom within the hearts and lives of those who live for Him.

Jesus gave "**the keys of the kingdom of heaven**" [Matthew 16:19]. Jesus is here speaking to Peter after his confession that Jesus was "*the Son of the living God!*" Peter received "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" What were they?

In Peter's first sermon, he shares three important "**keys**" of the kingdom of heaven.

On the day of Pentecost these, who were deeply convicted of their sin, asked, "*What shall we do?*"

Remember, this is Peter's first sermon after Christ has given him the "*keys of the kingdom of heaven*," and Peter answers these who had asked, "*What shall we do?*" Peter answered: (1) Repent,

(2) Be baptized for the remission of sins and (3) Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD, ONE MUST:

1. Have an unerring, solid, confidence in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, that Jesus was, indeed, divinely born of a virgin and lived, and died, for **me**, personally. I must repent of my sins and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior!
2. Witness a full-orbed, genuine, New Testament Water Baptism, which speaks of "*death to the old life and a new resurrection life in Christ Jesus.*"
3. Receive God's provision for a full-flowing, genuine, joyous experience in the Holy Spirit - an up-to-date experience of a Spirit-controlled life!

Jesus taught, "*Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" [John 3:3]. However, the believer must build upon this foundation!

The "**Keys of the Kingdom**" . . . the entrance into the kingdom of God . . . the foundation one must build upon - is shown in this illustration:

These three "*keys*" prepare one for the Lordship of Christ Jesus . . . **LIFE IN GOD** . . . which brings the fullness of joy which Christ desires for the believer.

Jesus prayed, just before going to the cross, "*I pray not that Thou, [Father] should take them out of the world, but that Thou should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, Sanctify them through Thy truth*" [John 17:15-17].

God has a divine purpose for the believer between the time of his conversion to Jesus Christ and the end of his life on earth.

Paul ends his marvelous letter to the Romans by saying, "*Now to Him [to Jesus Christ] that is of **power to establish you** according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery**, [of the kingdom of God] which was kept secret since the world began. But **NOW** made manifest, and by **THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS**, according to the commandments of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience** of faith.*"

What "*Scriptures of the prophets*" does Paul refer to?

The Bible student is told that the things which happened to Israel were for "*examples*" [the word means "*figures*"] for the believer, that he should not lust after evil things
- [1 Corinthians 10:6!]

"Now these things occurred . . . [the things that happened to the children of Israel in the Old Testament] . . . as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did"

Israel was enslaved in Egypt, under the cruel whip of taskmasters, however, God

delivered them from this miserable bondage. They were "*redeemed*" out of Egypt, as God commanded them to apply the blood of a sacrificed lamb to the door-post of their homes.

This is clearly a "*figure*" of our salvation from the bondage of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

However, this was ***only the beginning*** of Israel's journey. God wanted them not only out of Egypt, but to enter into the land of Canaan. Between Egypt and the land of Canaan lay a wilderness!

(1) **SALVATION FROM SIN**

After the blood was applied, Israel left Egypt's bondage.

(2) **BAPTISM IN WATER**

Israel's *first* experience was entering and coming up out of the Red Sea.

(3) **THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The next observation in the life of Israel was God's provision of the supernatural cloud and pillar of fire, leading, guiding and directing the children of Israel

(4) **GOD'S PROMISE AND COMMANDMENT**

Beginning in Exodus 19, God reveals His will for the children of Israel. **This is the Scripture, no doubt, which Paul is referring to in Romans 16:28, when He says, "The Scriptures of the prophets."**

Exactly what does Exodus 19 teach?

Exodus 19:5-6, "*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.*"

Note that there were two requirements that God asked of Israel: (1) To obey, and (2) to keep His commandments - (that is, His Word).

God wanted to "*bring them unto Himself*" [verse 4], that is, God wanted them in a *close* fellowship with Himself. And, then, God would make of them a "*peculiar [priceless] treasure, and a **KINGDOM** of priests.*"

Israel had a "**RELATIONSHIP**" with God, however, God desired something more, He offers them a "**FELLOWSHIP**" with Himself! Their *relationship* was a free gift, however, this *fellowship* would cost them something. They must "*obey God and keep His commandments* (His Word)."

This history of Israel is a record of their "*disobeying and failing to keep God's commandments.*"

God makes the very same offer to "***whosoever***" today. Look at 1 Peter 2:9, which states: "*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you*

may declare the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

Follow carefully the typology - ***we dare not miss this!*** God desired a "people" who would be His kingdom, whom He would draw unto Himself and have a close *fellowship* with. He offered this "Kingdom" to Israel, however, they "*disobeyed and broke His commandments.*" They rejected God's reign over them and said to God, "*We are lords, we will come no more unto Thee.*" God's love was spurned and the "*fellowship,*" God so desired, was broken.

The Old Testament ends with the words, "*I smite the earth with a curse,*" and then, for over 430 years, God did not speak to mankind.

Then God said, "*I will take My kingdom and give it to those who will bring forth fruit,*" and the New Testament opens with Jesus Christ preaching, "***The kingdom of God is at hand.***"

God desires to make out of believers a "*chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation . . . [a people claimed for His own] . . . a peculiar . . . [purchased possession] . . . people.*"

God is calling a "*special*" people unto Himself to enjoy close "*fellowship,*" however, the terms are **still contingent upon "obeying and keeping His Word."**

God promised Israel four blessings: (1) He would give them the Promise Land, (2) He would defeat their enemies, (3) they would be a "*special*" people unto Him, and (4) that He would reveal Himself unto them.

All they had to do was, obey Him and keep His word.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOW!

Matthew 3:2 - John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner, preached:
"The kingdom of God is at hand [upon you]."

Matthew 4:17 - John is put in prison, and **from that time** Jesus began to preach and to say, "*Repent . . . [turn your hearts from sin] . . . for the kingdom of God is at hand.*"

Matthew 12:28 - Jesus preached, "*The kingdom of God is come unto you.*"

The word "*kingdom*" is used **118 times** in the four Gospels,
- 32 times in the Book of Matthew alone!

Acts 28:31 - In this last verse of the Book of Acts, Paul stayed in Rome and "*preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Jesus, within the Lord's Prayer, taught us to pray to God, the Father, "***...Thy kingdom come...***"

WHAT IS THE "KINGDOM OF GOD"?

A "kingdom" is not a territory, but authority! It is not a locality, but a sovereignty. It is not a place, it is a condition! Before there can be a territory that is a "kingdom," there must be a "conditioned-people" who will be ruled!

[One translation renders the Greek phrase, kingdom of God as "*the reign of God.*"]

THE "KINGDOM OF GOD" IS WHERE GOD REIGNS!

In the second chapter of I Peter we are told that Israel rejected God from reigning over them, therefore God designed for "*whosoever will*" to be His kingdom. He offers to every believer the very same blessing He offered to Israel in the Old Testament. God is searching for those who are willing to let Him rule their lives. The condition is the same - "*Obey and keep His word.*"

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF "THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

Romans 14:17 clearly states,

*"The kingdom of God is . . . **righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!**"*

There were conditions in God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness on their way to Canaan, the promised land. God promised Israel that if they would "*obey and keep His word,*"

He would: (1) Reveal Himself to them;
 (2) Make them a "*special*" people unto Himself;
 (3) Defeat their enemies, and
 (4) Give them a land!

God had brought them up out of Egypt and delivered them from bondage, however, God wanted something more than just that, He promised them a "*kingdom.*"

God wants to do more than just deliver us from "*bondage,*" He desires to bring us into **RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY** in the Holy Spirit.

1. **RIGHTEOUSNESS** is the right acts of God.
 It literally means, always doing right.
 It is God-likeness, or being like Christ Jesus, in one's actions.
2. **PEACE** is a calm, serene, tranquil spirit within,
 a spirit that remains unruffled in all circumstances.
3. **JOY** is active, while "*peace*" is passive!
 Joy is an inner enchantment and contentment.
 Joy is a rapturous, pleasurable happiness
 which nothing can upset or destroy.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY IS THE BELIEVER'S "*PROMISE LAND*"

The kingdom of God is **within** us [Luke 17:21].

Israel's kingdom was **WITHOUT!** Israel's wilderness was **WITHOUT**
 Our wilderness is **WITHIN** - Our kingdom is **WITHIN**

Israel's kingdom sought to *master a subject* - **outwardly**
 Our kingdom is *being mastered* - **inwardly**

Romans 5:17 states, ". . . *they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign **IN LIFE** through the one man, Jesus Christ.*" God tells us, in this verse, "*we shall reign **in this life** by the power of Jesus Christ,*" in other words, the kingdom of God is **NOW** in this life!

What is God's promised land . . . ["Canaan"] . . . for the believer?

In the 8th chapter of Romans (under the New Covenant) there are 21 promises to the believer:

1. He can live without condemnation (vs. 1)
2. He can be free from the law of sin and death (vs. 2)
3. He can have the law fulfilled in him (vs. 4)
4. He can be spiritually minded (vs. 6)
5. The Spirit of God will dwell in him (vs. 9)
6. The Spirit will heal his mortal body (vs. 11)
7. He can (through the spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh (vs. 13)
8. He can be led of the Spirit of God (vs. 14)
9. He can experience the spirit of adoption to cry "*Father.*" (vs. 15)
10. He can know the Spirit bearing witness to his spirit (vs. 16)
11. He can be a joint-heir with Jesus Christ (vs. 17)
12. He can know the glorious liberty of the children of God (vs. 21)
13. He can experience the redemption of his physical body (vs. 23)
14. The Spirit will lend him a hand with his weaknesses (vs. 26)
15. He can know that all things work together for his good (vs. 28)
16. He can be conformed to the image of God's Son (vs. 29)
17. God will (with His son) freely give his **all** things (vs. 32)
18. Jesus **also** will make intercession for him (vs. 34)
19. He can know inseparable love (vs. 35)
20. He can be more than conquerors (vs. 37)
21. He can experience the love of God in Christ Jesus (vs. 39)

Leaving Egypt's bondage required only that the blood be applied to the door-post, but the "*promise land*" was contingent on **OBEYING** and **KEEPING GOD'S WORD!**

God desires to do more than just to "*take us to heaven,*" He desires to bring *heaven* into

our souls now, in this life! God desires to give the believer RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE and JOY in the Holy Spirit within his life *now!*

If, for instances, a believer has hate, lust or envy in his heart, while it does not, necessarily, mean that he will not go to heaven, but he will, however, lose God's reign in his life - and that hate, lust or envy, will rob him of righteousness, peace and joy!

God does not only want to take believers to heaven when they die, but God desires to bring to the believer's life - *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* - and this is only possible when the believer lets God rule and reign in his life.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

I believe I can safely say, without any doubt, that every believer desires the ability to "*always do right*" [which is what "*righteousness*" is] . . . to be "*God-like*."

PEACE

The true believer will also desire the calm, serene, tranquil spirit . . . free from fear, worry, resentment and unforgiveness within his soul that comes as a result of "*the kingdom of God*."

JOY

The believe will also yearn for an inner content which nothing can destroy!

All believers desire righteousness, peace and joy!

The is a big difference in what one "*wants*" and what one can pay the price for!

This can be illustrated by someone going into a supermarket and piling their shopping cart full of everything they see that they "*want*." Everything that catches their eye they simply pile into their shopping cart, going down isle after isle and getting everything they see that looks good to them and simply piling it into their shopping cart.

After they have gotten everything they "*wanted*" and arrived at the cashier, it is now time to "*pay*" for it.

They didn't realize that it would be so costly, therefore, when it came time to "*pay*" for it, they find that it is too expensive for them to buy - **They couldn't pay the cost!**

SALVATION IS "FREE"

HOWEVER,

"RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY WILL COST SOMETHING!"

The believer desires God's righteousness, peace and joy and loads it all on his cart, however, when he comes to the Cashier and finds out what it will cost him, he finds that it will cost him *everything* that he has.

To reject the "*kingdom of God*" . . . [the rule of God in one's life] . . . brings loss of God's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

If the believer lives his own life instead of obeying and keeping God's Word, he loses God's righteousness, disturbs God's peace and upsets God's joy within his own life.

The "*Manifesto*" of the kingdom of God is given to us in the Sermon-on-the-Mount, found in Matthew, chapters 5, 6 and 7. Here, believers, have their *marching orders*. This is **NOT** a requirement for "*heaven*," our eternal home, but it is necessary if the believer is to have God's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY ARE NOT ABSTRACT THINGS!

I Corinthians 1:30 states that "**Christ** is made our righteousness."

In John 14:27, Jesus said, "**I** am your peace"

In John 15:11 Jesus said that "**He** is our joy."

The point is, that God does not tell the believer that He will give some abstract thing, such as righteousness, peace and joy, He says, "*Jesus Christ is our righteousness, peace and joy!*"

JUST WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Jesus Christ did not say to the believer, "*I give you love*," He said, "*I am Love!*" God's love is not an abstract thing, which the believer "*has*," but it is Jesus Christ living **in** the believer - loving the world through Him! Jesus did not teach, "*I have life to give to you*," but He said, "**I am** Life."

Imagine a diagrams of a "***heart***" with Christ standing outside – representing a life without Christ. He is standing outside the sinner's life. Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him*" [Rev. 3:20].

Whenever anyone receives Christ it involves turning to God from self, trusting Christ to come into one's life to forgive sins and to make one what God wants believers to be.

NOW IMAGINE TWO HEARTS – REPRESENT TWO KINDS OF BELIEVER'S LIVES

ONE US A "SELF-CONTROLLED" LIFE

Imagine "ego," or finite self sitting on the throne. Christ is **in** the heart, but, He is not on the throne of the life.

Imagine a believer whose interests are controlled by "*self*." This can only result in discord, frustration and conflicts! It's a picture of one who has accepted Jesus Christ as His Savior, but He is not "*Lord*" (Master) and does not rule in this believer's life.

A CHRIST-CONTROLLED LIFE

Now, imagine a heart with Christ sitting on the throne of the believer's life. Christ is ruling and reigning. It illustrates "*the kingdom of God*" in the believer's life.

The “*ego*” of the person has been dethroned; the interests of life are under control of Jesus Christ, as infinite King, resulting in harmony with God's kingdom.

WHICH HEART REPRESENTS YOUR LIFE?

What heart would you like to have represent your life? If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and would like to do so, you can receive Christ into your heart right now through prayer. (Prayer is simply talking to God).

A suggested prayer might be: *"Lord Jesus, I need You. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen!"*

Some have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, however, they are living selfish lives instead of letting God rule in their lives. They are like the one Paul speaks of in Romans 7:19 when he states, *"For the good that I would - I do not, but the evil which I would not - that I do."*

Believers, who live in the wilderness of Romans 7, are like Israel, who had the blood applied and had been delivered from Egypt's bondage, however, was living in the wilderness and never arrived in the Promise-Land.

The believer's "*wilderness*" is pictured in Romans 7, however, thanks be to God, Romans 8 is the Christian's "***Promise-Land!***"

Keep in mind the sequence of events as they are given in the Old Testament:

- (1) The children of Israel had left Egypt after applying the blood, a type of Salvation.
- (2) The children Israel had crossed the Red Sea, a sign of Water Baptism,
- (3) They had experienced a cloud and pillar of fire, a figure of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- (4) They had received God's clear promise and command to enter the Promised-Land, however they wondered for **forty years** in the wilderness before they ever entered the Promise-Land, even though the Promise-Land was only **ELEVEN DAYS** journey from Sinai!

Why? - because of unbelief!

Hebrews gives much light on this subject. Chapter three begins, *"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."* There can be no doubt that this portion of Scripture is addressed to born-again believers. Note what verses 8-11 teaches.

"Do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried Me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, `Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways.' So I declared on oath in My anger, `They shall never enter My rest.'"

The Weymouth translation renders this passage as: "*Don't close your mind to what happened to those who rebelled against Me at the time of their desert ordeal. Your fathers put Me to the test and put My doings to the proof. For forty years they saw My reactions. Wherefore I grew exasperated with that generation, and said, Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not recognized My ways. So I vowed in My indignation, they shall never enter into My place of rest.*"

Our purpose in this study is not to do a complete study of the Book of Hebrews, but to show that Hebrews is not speaking to the unbeliever of being "*born-again,*" but, rather, the passage is speaking to the believer of "*Christian growth*" and "*entering into God's rest*" - the believer's Promise-Land!

In the diagram on the last page, page 15, note that within the "*circle,*" Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness when she should have gone straight into the Promise-Land.

Look at the story as it unfolds in the Old Testament:

THE PROMISE-LAND ONLY ELEVEN DAYS AWAY

The illustration of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness leaves no excuse for us to repeat their experience. Moses had led Israel out of Egypt and brought them to the very edge of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, and then, because they were afraid of the battle for Canaan, turned back, way back to Horeb, and then God says in Deuteronomy 1:2,

"It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea."

Only eleven days journey from Horeb to the very gateway to the Promise-land, Kadesh-barnea. Here God spoke to them by Moses in Deuteronomy 1:6 and 8,

"The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain . . . See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers--to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob--and to their descendants after them.'"

However, instead of obeying God to go forward and possess their inheritance they rebelled and wandered for another thirty-eight years in the wilderness of defeat. It took them forty years to make a journey of only eleven days, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

In the great congregation of Israel which was delivered from the yoke of Egypt, there were but a few who were willing to take the yoke of obedience and surrender to go, and these alone were permitted to enter Canaan and find the "*second rest.*" The others all perished in the wilderness. To every believer comes this call. Many have already come to Christ for Salvation, but then comes the call to service, to a dedicated life of obedience and trust. This second call is just as definite as the first, and requires just as definite a decision. After the believer is saved, he has the choice of going on to victory in Canaan, or dying in the wilderness of defeat.

It was so with Israel. Soon after their deliverance from Egypt, God brought them to the very borders of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea and placed before them a definite choice. They had received the report of the spies and God now faces them with an important decision. The command was clear. Moses said to them at the very portal of victory,

"See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged . . . But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You grumbled in your tents . . . and said, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites [the giants] there.' Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eye.'" - Deuteronomy 1:21, 26-30

The decision was clearly up to them. Would they obey God, trust Him fully, or listen to the flesh? It was a momentous occasion, for much depended upon it. They made the wrong decision and the sad record continues in Deuteronomy 1:32,

"In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God."

They hardened their hearts and instead of victory with God, they went down in defeat to the flesh. Listen to the result in Deuteronomy 1:34-35,

"When the LORD heard what you said, He was angry and solemnly swore: 'Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers'"

This is the incident to which Hebrews three and four refer, and the believer is warned not to make the same mistake. Many are standing where Israel stood at Kadesh-barnea. They are saved, "*born-again*," however, they are defeated because of disobedience . . . a lack of separation from the world . . . neglect of God's Word . . . the weights of this world . . . unconfessed sins . . . or, just fear of paying the price of an all-out yielding to Christ. God is calling to them to dedicate their all to Him and trust Him completely, and they, like Israel, are hesitating, because the price of full surrender seems too great.

God uses those who are willing to obey. Every great servant of God has had two experiences: First they came as lost sinners to Christ for salvation, then, sooner or later, they were faced with God's call to complete obedience in yielding their lives for service to Christ. Call it dedication, consecration, full surrender, second blessing, complete yielding or what you will, it is the crying need of this day. Too many think of the Christian life as merely escaping hell and going to heaven, but know nothing of the joy of service and a life of complete surrender, and the peace of God here and now, and a glorious reward by and by.

Carefully weigh the question: "*Will it be victory in Canaan, or wandering in the wilderness of regrets for not daring to follow Jesus all the way?*" Examine your heart today, look at what your redemption cost Him, and ask yourself, "*Can I withhold aught from Him who gave His all for me?*"

As one reads through the Book of Hebrews, he find mentions of "*the promise*," as in chapter 10, verse 36, which states, "*after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise*," or in 4:1, where it states, "*Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*" This "promise" is mentioned nine times in the Book of Hebrews, and is compared to the "*promise-Land*" which God promised to Israel.

Hebrews 3:7-11, "*So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried Me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, `Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"*"

This promise of "*rest*" which God gives to the believer, is not speaking of heaven - our eternal home. Canaan certainly is not a type of heaven. There will be no giants to fight in our heavenly home. There will be no enemy cities to capture, no enemy armies to do battle with, in heaven, where Christ has prepared a place for us!

No! Canaan is a type of God's promise to the believer HERE and NOW in this life. What is it? Let's let Scripture answer for us

Hebrews 12:28, "*Therefore, since we are receiving a KINGDOM.*"

Hebrews 10:36 states, "*You [born-again believer] need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised.*"

Then the readers comes to chapter 11 of Hebrews and reads of a list of heroes of faith who did not turn back, however, Hebrews 11:39-40 states,

"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

Now, after this foundation has been laid, the 12th chapter of Hebrews deals with God's "*chastening*" . . . [not "*penal*" chastening, but, rather, "*chastening* which brings the believer into Kingdom Living].

Why is the believer chastened? Hebrews 12:10 states,

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness."

Verse 11 states the this "*chastening*" will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness "*to those who learn their lesson.*"

Hebrews 12:11, *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*

What the believer receives through "chastening" is - "a **KINGDOM**"

Hebrews 12:28, *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe."*

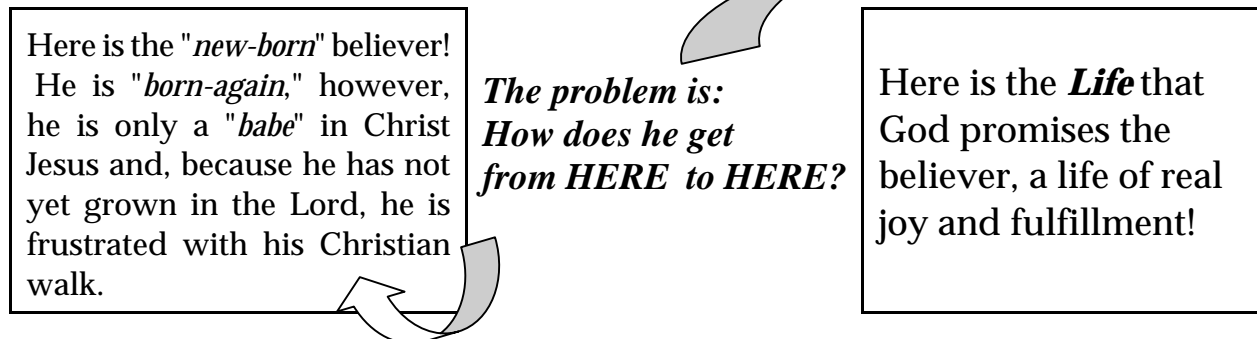
The Book of Hebrews is not dealing with the subject of whether one is going to heaven or not, but, rather, the whole theme of the Book of Hebrews is concerning the believer's "**GROWTH**" in his Christian life after he has been born-again. The Book of Hebrews was written to deal with the maturity and spiritual development of the believer.

THIS INSIGHT IN THE "GROWTH" OF THE BELIEVER ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Why did God allow Israel to be "tempted in the wilderness?"
and
"Why did God bother "chastening" Israel again and again?"

Hardships, trials and temptations show the believer **what he is** and **where he stand** in his work with God, and these hardships, trials and temptations *play an important role in what the believer will be in the future* and are factors in the believer's spiritual growth process which he must go through if he is ever to become a mature individual, capable of living a full and meaningful life.

Perhaps this will help us to understand this concept.



Whenever a believer is "born-again" in Christ Jesus, God's Word declares that he is a "babe" in Christ and that God's intention, and purpose, for him, is for him to "grow up." The function of trials and temptations is to provoke a definite choice of action on the believer's part. The believer's temptations and trials are a dividing line between "innocence" and "awareness." Once the believer faces a trial or temptation, and makes a choice of action, he has stepped into a new dimension of reality. **IF HIS CHOICE IS RIGHT, HE WILL MOVE INTO "JOY,"**
HOWEVER, IF HIS CHOICE IS WRONG, HE WILL CONTINUE LIVING IN "FRUSTRATION."

Hardships, tests, trials and temptations must come into the believer's life, whether he likes it or not! They always present an opportunity to move toward, and **into**, joy! They always

present a lesson to be learned. *The believer's choice demonstrates whether the lesson is learned or if it must be repeated!*

TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS ARE NOT THE **CAUSE** OF TROUBLE, BUT, RATHER, THEY MERELY PRESENT THE BELIEVER WITH A CHOICE, WHAT WILL HE DO, **GROW OR REMAIN IMMATURE?**

Romans 5:17 teaches that because of Adam's sin, "*sin caused death [that is, separation from God's intention and purpose for mankind] . . . to reign as king over us all,"* however, "*if we will receive God's gift of grace and righteousness, we shall reign **IN THIS LIFE** by Jesus Christ!"*

Is there any discrepancy between our Christian life as we now experience it - and - what we know, down deep in our hearts, it should be?

<p>HOW THE BELIEVER RESPONSE TO TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS IN LIFE DETERMINES WHETHER OR NOT HE HAS RECEIVED THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE TO HIM.</p>

The only way the "new-born" believer, who is only a "babe" in Christ, and has not yet grown in the Lord – if he is ever to walk in the *Life* that God promises – a life of real joy and fulfillment – is to *pass through* the **TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS** of life.

Temptations and trials, in themselves, are not good or evil, they simply "*put the proof*" what the believer really is.

The Greek word which is translated as "*temptation*" in our Bibles, literally means: "*that which puts to the proof.*"

Trials and temptations are not to make the believer's life hard or difficult, but, rather, they are to assist him in the preparation needed to receive the "*good life*" that God promises him.

James, chapter one, teaches, that trials and temptations are not something to frighten the believer, nor something to be avoided, but, rather, they are a **necessary** part of the believer's Christian walk . . . something he should understand and face eagerly and joyfully because these trials and temptations are designed to prepare him to receive what he longs for.

THERE IS ALWAYS PURPOSE IN EVERY TRIAL AND TEMPTATION WHICH GOD ALLOWS TO COME INTO THE BELIEVER'S LIFE!

This purpose is clearly revealed and demonstrated, beginning with the Old Testament and carried on through the New Testament. Temptation can provide a turning point that determines the success or failure of experiencing fulfilled promises

Between the believer and the fulfillment of each of God's promises stands a situation that includes a trial or temptation!

From Frustration to Joy

Is there anything more sad than believers who have resigned themselves to the erroneous idea that God either cannot, or will not, bring them into the relationship to the promises God offers in His Word?

God's Word pictures Him as eager and anxious to give a "*blessed*" life, a life filled with joy, satisfaction and fulfillment!

What is the problem?

HOW TO TURN PROMISES INTO PROVISIONS

Let's take a look at God's dealing with Israel (our "*example*") again, before we go into the New Testament. God brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery in order to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey:

Deuteronomy 6:3, "*Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.*" (verses 10-11) "*When the LORD your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you - a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant - then when you eat and are satisfied.*"

Remember, "*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come*" [1 Corinthians 10:11].

God's promises are applicable to us today! These promises are our "*spiritual*" heritage today! God desires to bring us out of whatever bondage we may be in - psychological, spiritual or physical - in order to bring us into "*a land flowing with milk and honey!*"

This phrase, "*land flowing with milk and honey,*" is a picture of the abundance of good things God has for the believer in this life.

IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, DOESN'T IT?

God said, if Israel would "*obey and keep His word, He would*" . . .

1. Reveal Himself to them
2. Make them a "**special**" people unto Himself
3. Defeat all their enemies, and
4. Give them a land '*flowing with milk and honey.*'

God desires to lead the believer into situations where He will provide everything the believer's heart may desire. To get all of this we do not have to *work for it - earn it - or deserve it!*

Remember, Israel had been delivered out of Egypt's bondage by the "*blood*" applied, they

were God's children, **HOWEVER**, they wandered in the *wilderness* for 40 years, without entering the "Promise-Land!" **Why?** Hebrews 3:12-13 states that it was "*because of unbelief and deceitfulness of sin.*"

Salvation through Jesus Christ is provided through His precious blood. It is a free gift, by one accepting Christ as his Savior. One does not - (he cannot) - pay for his own sins. Instead of a death-penalty . . . [that is separation from God for eternity] . . . one receives God's gift of grace - God's pardon, and eternal life in Christ Jesus!

ONE OF THE MOST DEBATED ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH IS:
"Legalism" verses "**everything by grace.**"

The legalist states, "*We must observe certain rules and regulations in order to be in right relationship with God*" and, those who emphasis God's grace state, "*All things are free in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter what one does, or how they live, because they are saved by God's unmerited favor.*"

Are we to choose up sides and come out fighting? God forbid! The problem is that **neither extreme position is correct!** Both positions have an aspect of truth, but they simply have carried it too far. Error comes by *neglect*, however, it can also come by *over emphasis!*

GOD DOES NOT WANT "**LEGALISM**," BUT NEITHER DOES HE WAS
DISOBEDIENCE

These Scriptures from Hebrews will help us to understand God's ways:

Hebrews 4:1-11, "*Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest . . . for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*"

Hebrews 3:10-11, "*That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'*"

1. The "rest" referred to here, is not the rest that comes after death, but, rather, it is "*when the believer ceases from his own labors*" **NOW** in this life, and let Christ work through him that he has rest! Christ alone does the work **for** and **through** the believer.

As long as the believer attempts to do God's labor in his own ability, and has not surrendered his self completely to Christ, he makes it impossible for Christ to give him this promised rest.

2. This promise is given with a condition because God said, "*I will do this - **IF** - you will do that!*"

Trials and temptations of life present the believer with a choice either to: (1) to fulfill God's condition, or (2) to ignore God's conditions, and do things his own way. If the believer fulfills the condition God gives then he will enter into the provision God gives - [**the Promise-Land!**] If, however, he ignores God's conditions, he will not be able to receive fulfillment of God's promise. [Read Hebrews 3:10-11 again!]

FOLLOW THIS ANALOGY CLOSELY NOW . . .

Jesus said in John 15:7, "*If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*"

Notice the condition: "**IF** you remain in Me and My words remain in you . . ."

Even the promise of salvation is conditioned, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, what whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life.*" Many will perish simply because they have not met the condition of salvation, which is offered as a free gift - to those who will choose to "*believe*" - [that is, trusts, cling to, rely on Christ Jesus].

Let's take a look at John 15: 5, Jesus says, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.*"

Notice, the believer "*will produce a large crop of fruit,*" providing he lives in Christ and allows Christ's Word to live in him! **NOW**, Christ goes on to explain why this is so, verse 6, "*For apart from Me you can't do a thing! If anyone separates from Me, he is thrown away like a useless branch, withers and is gathered into a pile with all the others and are burned.*"

Notice, the believer "*will produce a large crop of fruit,*" providing he lives in Christ and allows Christ's Word to live in him! **NOW**, Christ goes on to explain why this is so, verse 6, "*For apart from Me you can't do a thing! If anyone separates from Me, he is thrown away like a useless branch, withers and is gathered into a pile with all the others and are burned.*"

THE CONDITION IS NECESSARY FOR THE SIMPLY REASON THAT, APART FROM JESUS CHRIST, THE BELIEVER CANNOT PRODUCE SPIRITUAL FRUIT!

God tells us that the reason Israel did not possess the land and enjoy the kind of life God wanted for them, was because "*apart from God, they were unable to do so.*" The condition, "*If you are willing and obedience,*" was necessary before they could receive the promise because God knew if they tried to do it in their own way, they would fail miserably in the end.

Their obedience to God was designed to reduce their dependency on their own resources and strength, and increase their dependency on God.

God is not a "*tyrant*" who wants the believer to cower in obedience before Him, but it is because He loves the believer and knows his nature well enough to see that, left to his own devices, he always makes a mess of things.

Jesus taught that, "*Apart from Him the believer cannot do anything truly worthwhile and*

lasting. The believer cannot produce the kind of fruit Christ can produce within the believer, providing he stays close to Christ and depends upon Him to produce His fruit through the believer's life." [John 15:5].

NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THIS PRINCIPLE:
***"Bearing Christ-like fruit - is God's work through
 the believer who willingly obeys God's commands."***

The only way the believer can ever enter into his "*Promise-Land*" is to "*rest*" in Christ Jesus, let Christ rule and reign in the believer's life, because the "*Promise-Land*" is not a place of frantic self-effort!

Let's read again Hebrews 4:1-11, "*Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest . . . for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience."*

Remember, the only way Israel could get to Canaan was through the wilderness and also, between the believer and his "*Promise-Land*" is a "***Wilderness***." For Israel, it was a geographical fact, for the believer it consists of problems, difficulties and confusion. The believer's "*wilderness*" is, none the less, a very real wilderness.

It is in the believer's "*wilderness*" that he comes to the point of questioning the validity of the conditions of the promise and, at times, the "*Promise-Land*" itself.

This kind of questioning ***must*** be solved before the believer can move into his provision and, God has deliberately placed a "*wilderness*" in the believer's way to bring about a confrontation of the believer's will and Christ's rule.

The believer must see the validity of God's condition and fulfill them, before he can move on!

John D. Rockefeller once said, "*I have seldom, if ever, found a place where I could give in substantial amounts without hurting people.*" If John D. Rockefeller felt like that, how do you think God feels?

Whenever one reads of God's "*Promise-Land*" . . . (a land flowing with milk and honey) . . . just waiting for the believer, God hears many say, "*Oh, Lord, I'm ready for it!*"

BUT ARE WE?

Most believer's cry out, when they realize that the "*Promise-Land*" is for them, "*Lord, give me my inheritance ***right now***, I can stand it!" [Does this sound familiar?]*

Remember the prodigal son, and how he got into trouble? He demanded his inheritance *too soon*. When he had all that money in his pocket, he forgot about his father.

"An inheritance gotten too soon, shall not be blessed in the end"
- Proverbs 20:21

Have you ever known of an "*instant movie star*", or some other celebrity who arrived at stardom overnight? They are chosen by some "*star maker*" and given the royal treatment - television, magazine, parties, attention and admiration all within a short period of time. What happens? Almost invariably, they become self-willed and self-centered. Before long, they become so conceited that no one can work with them. With very few exceptions, this is the pattern of those who come into *sudden* success or riches. A million-dollar inheritance will destroy a person, more often than not. One has to be prepared and mature to be able to handle that kind of success.

GOD'S ULTIMATE GOAL FOR THE BELIEVER IS THAT HE BE SPIRITUALLY MATURE

To accomplish this, God cannot "*dump the whole package*" on the believer before he is mature enough to handle the responsibility.

Moses warned Israel about four things that could happen when they had received riches and eaten until they were full:

1. They could easily forget God
2. They could attribute their good life to a source other than God
3. They could "*provoke*" God by trying His patience.

How did they "*provoke*" God? The provoked God by asking for more than God wanted them to have at the moment.

4. They could test and tempt God.

Illustration: An electric handsaw is dangerous for a youngster to play with, simply because he is not prepared to handle it

One might say, "*Electric handsaws are too dangerous, I'll never have one around,*" on the other hand, one might say, "*Since it takes skill to operate one, I'll learn how to handle it carefully. I'll start learning responsibility, so I can be trust with an electric handsaw.*"

Israel wandered in endless circles in their wilderness because of a lack of dependency on God and a fear of the battles to be fought in the land of Canaan.

Many believers have become so used to dwelling in the "*wilderness*" that they think God wants them to remain there *permanently*, that the wilderness is the only normal way of life for a Christian. They are living in the 7th chapter of Romans - far removed from the fulfillment of God's Promise-Land, found in Romans, chapter 8!

While the "*wilderness*" is a **necessary** experience in the believer's life, he was never meant to be permanent resident there! He must go through the "*wilderness*" in order to learn dependence upon God . . . submitting to the Kingship of Christ Jesus . . . however, when he learns submission to Christ as King, he has an open invitation to enter the "*Promise-Land*" God has waiting for him.

God's original plan for Israel was that she might be an example to the world of His goodness and His ability to undertake in their behalf. They were chosen so that they might be instruments in God's hand in drawing the entire world unto Himself. Today, believers are His "chosen" people! God does not want His believers wondering around in the wilderness year after year, but, rather, He wants to bless and to undertake for them in order that they will be an example to a confused and needy world.

GOD WANTS THE BELIEVER'S LIFE TO REFLECT HIS
GLORY, SO THAT THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM WILL
BE DRAWN TO HIM - *"We are His witnesses!"*

Ephesians 3:10-11 state, *"That the Church . . . (that's all believers) . . . might **now** be used to display to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realm the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom, in conformity to that timeless purpose which He created in Christ Jesus, our Lord."*

The believer's life, under the reign and rulership of Christ Jesus, must not be shallow and empty . . . [no different from others who know not Christ and are desperately seeking to escape their bondage] . . . but noticeably different - radiant with a joy and a spiritual power for living which only Christ can give!

This deep desire on God's part was spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah, when he said, *"I will cleanse away all their sins against Me, and pardon them. Then this city will be an honor to Me, and it will give Me joy and bring a source of praise and glory to Me before all the nations of the earth. The people of the world will see the good I do for My people and will be filled with awe!"* [Jeremiah 33:8-9].

Jesus expressed His Father's desire today, this way:

"You are the world's light - a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light. Let it shine for all, let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father" [Matthew 5:14-16].

God desires the believer's life cleansed of every bit of rebellion . . . that every area of his heart be ruled by Him . . . when this is accomplished he can move from the "wilderness" into the "Promise-Land" and be a fulfillment of Jesus' command to be a light in the world to God's glory!

HOW DOES THE BELIEVER GET THROUGH THE WILDERNESS INTO GOD'S PROVISION?

The question could well be stated, *"How does the believer get from **FRUSTRATION** into **JOY** in his Christian walk with God?"*

The answer is:

THE LAW OF THE FOUR "P's" THE LAW OF THE FOUR "P's"

Christianity is not complicated! The relationship between God and man can be understood in terms simple enough for a child to grasp. Nevertheless, the "spiritual" implications

of these truths bring the wisest of men to a point of awe!

Christianity in operation is not only practical but it is also completely dependable. In His dealings with men, God gives us a straightforward conditional statement: "*If you will do this, I will do that; on one hand, if you refuse, this will certainly happen.*"

GOD ALWAYS MAKES A **CONDITIONAL** PROMISE, WHICH IS ALWAYS FOLLOWED BY A SITUATION WHICH WILL PROVOKE A DECISION EITHER TO FULFILL GOD'S CONDITION OR TO IGNORE IT

- The fulfillment of the promise cannot come until after the believer has made the decision, and only if he decides to obey God's Word!

This pattern is absolutely invariably in God's workings with men. It is consistent throughout the Bible as well as in personal experience. There is no exception to this rule!

The Law of the Four P's!

*God gives the believer a **PROMISE**,
which is linked to a **PRINCIPLE** (or condition),
followed by a **PROBLEM** (temptation in the wilderness)
- leading to a **PROVISION!***

The *promises* of God are meant to be fulfilled. Unfulfilled promises should not be the normal Christian's experience. The trouble is that many have "*bogged down*" in the *problem* because they do not understand the problem in relation to God's *provision*.

A **PROBLEM** does not mean that God has not answered the believer's prayer - the **PROBLEM** hasn't come *instead of* the answer, but, rather, the **PROBLEM** is *a part of* the answer, or *the means of obtaining* the **PROVISION!**

When the believer has a *problem*, he, often blames the devil, and feels that Satan has interfered and upset God's intention. The devil **is** in the picture, alright, *but* only with God's permission!

"Blessed is the man who shall endure temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive . . . " [James 1:12].

- WHEN THE BELIEVER "**CLAIM A PROMISE**"
- HE MUST MAKE CERTAIN HE UNDERSTANDS THIS "**PRINCIPLE**" -
- HOW TO TURN HIS "**PROMISES**" INTO "**PROVISIONS**"!

The believer should expect a situation where he will be tempted to ignore God's Word - and the Kingship of Christ in his life! If he ignores God's Word, there can be **no** provision! If he decides to fulfill the condition, he can confidently expect God to bring him into the provision.

The writers of the New Testament, over and over again, used the experience of Israel's wilderness journey as a pattern for all believers because the **promises** God established for them

are now offered to the believer, as well, through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Israel received their promise in Egypt when God said, "*I will lead you to a wonderful land flowing with milk and honey.*"

When the believer accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, he became eligible for the same promise: "*I will lead you into a place of abundant blessings.*"

God brought the children of Israel to Mount Sinai and gave them the **PRINCIPLES** - The Ten Commandments - and the **CONDITION** - "*If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land,*" however, then came the wilderness, or the **PROBLEM!**

Why?

The children of Israel needed to learn who they were and who God was - in a way they would never forget. Only then, could they come safely into their provision without becoming haughty, proud and consequently destroy themselves.

Listen as Moses speaks for God: "*Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands . . . Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, **then** your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, '**My** power and the strength of **my** hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*" [Deuteronomy 8:2, 12-18]

The purpose of the wilderness, for Israel, (and for the believer today), is to make the believer recognize his insufficiency and God's all-sufficiency! Once the believer realizes that there must be a willingness and obedience on his part to follow God's condition, and he realizes he cannot fulfill God's conditions on his own and, is willing to *give up* trying to obey God's conditions in his own strength. Well, then, if one cannot, on his own, be willing and obedience to God's conditions, who, then, can meet God's conditions? It does seem that it can not be done! That's why it is imperative to realize that Jesus Christ has already **DONE** it . . . (He has already accomplished God's conditions) . . . for the believer!

GOD'S "GIFT OF SALVATION" IS SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF THE FOUR P's

God promises salvation to those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. The principle is our faith in Him, the provision is peace - **YET** - many believers are struggling in their first wilderness of doubts about forgiveness of sins. they say, "*I just don't know if it is true, that Christ has forgiven me of my sins, or not!*" There is no way to get the **provision** of real peace in God except through the **problem** of doubt!

To have the provision, peace, the believer must come to the point of deciding, in spite of feelings and doubts, God's Word can be trusted. The believer must *choose* to believe that Christ is indeed God's Son who died for his personal rebellion and sins. **There is no other way to have peace with God!**

Peace and assurance can only come *after* the believer has decided to trust God's Word in the midst of uncertainty - **That is Faith!**

If the believer does his part of the condition - ["*believe on Jesus Christ*"] - he can be absolutely certain that God has done His part. ***The believer has God's Word on that!***

This sense of security and peace in God can only come after a period of serious doubt and questioning!

God's intent and purpose for each believer, once he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, is for his life to be an abundance of ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control***. [See Galatians 5:22-23].

Why is it, this description seldom fits the believer's daily experience? The reason is: The fruit of the Spirit does not grow *automatically* in the believer's life, but, only as he deliberately chooses to stick to God's principles through a problem situation.

First, we have a **PROMISE** that the Holy Spirit will transform us into a Christ-like person, displaying this fruit of the Spirit. However, the **PRINCIPLE** is, "**When** (and only when) *the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us*" [Gal. 5:22].

The **PRINCIPLE** (or "*condition*") is that the Holy Spirit must control our lives! This fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced by will-power, only the Holy Spirit can produce it in our lives.

It is only as we are rightly connected to Christ through the Holy Spirit, that we can produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Between the **PROMISE**, the **PRINCIPLE** and the **PROVISION**, we can expect **PROBLEMS!**

When we ask God to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we can expect Him to put us into a situation where will be confronted with something, or some people, who are very difficult to love!

The **PROVISION**, more love, comes only as we go through problems and allow Christ to take over and control our natural inclinations.

We cannot get to the **PROVISION** without going through the **PROBLEM!**

Jesus, Himself, describes how fruit is encouraged to grow in John 15:1-4:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every

branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me."

This "*pruning back for greater production*" is an apt description of the believer's wilderness experience. The believer goes through circumstances in which he cannot act in love and patience in his own strength any longer. He is forced to admit to his own unlovingness and impatience.

The believer is brought to a decision. He can either admit his insufficiency, confess his unlovingness, and turn himself over to God, asking Him to *make* him loving, or, he can refuse to see God's hand in the problem, explode, and blame the whole thing on the terrible circumstances he has fallen into.

WHAT IS THE BELIEVER TO DO WITH PROBLEMS?

A major part of the believer's journey from **PROMISE** to **PROVISION** is a **PROBLEM!** His behavior in the problem - determines to what extent (how soon, if ever or not) he will come into his provision!

There were three basic alternatives facing Israel in the wilderness:

1. ANOTHER LAP

A negative response to the **PROBLEM** leads to an extended stay in the wilderness. God provides a similar set of circumstances to give the believer another chance through the same problem.

2. BLEACHED BONES

Repeated negative responses causes the believer to perish in the wilderness. A continuing hardened attitude eventually prevents him from coming into the **PROVISION!**

3. STAND AND ENTER

If the believer's response is positive and he chooses to stand on God's **PRINCIPLES** through the **PROBLEM**, he is able to enter his **PROVISION** with little delay.

First, note that Israel, having just been delivered from the Red Sea, were confident God would take care of them. They sang and danced about the Promise-Land.

[Read Exodus 15:1-2, 13-18 and 30]

However, their next **PROBLEM** was different, when they arrived at Morah, they had no water to drink.

God sent a **PROBLEM** of a different kind from the one that they had seen Him solve before, and they did not trust God to provide for them now. They cried, "*Must we die of thirst*

here in the wilderness?"

Because of this negative response, God, in essence, said to Israel, "*Take another lap!*"

Isn't it true, that we often anticipate that God will work in a certain way, unaware that He is working in another way?

Let's say that there is a difficult person in your life, and so, you pray and ask God to take care of them. You expect God to either turn them into a *nice* person, or to take them away [far away] from you. However, instead, God works in a different way than you expected. He deals with the real enemy - *your pride and unyielding ego!* And, God permits them to become even more difficult, so that you will turn to Him and ask Him to take your pride and unyielding spirit - and yield to Him instead. You let Christ rule within!

We, often, blame our difficulties on our circumstances, expecting God to change them, when we identify the root cause of our real problem and realize that our own attitude is causing the problem, then God will begin to change our circumstances.

Well, Israel arrived at Elim, a place of palm trees and twelve springs of water. God once more showed them how He could provide. But, then, just a few days later, they couldn't find anything to eat. Instead of their problem being "*bitter water*," it was now a lack of food.

Again, their response was negative. God had provided a similar set of circumstances to give them a chance to trust Him and to stand on His **PRINCIPLES** - or to ignore His principles and complain!

They complained!

God was patient with them, and rained quail in the evenings and manna in the mornings. Again, God had demonstrated His love and ability to provide, but He said, in essence, "*take another lap!*"

This lap in the wilderness, led them to Rephidim, where, it wasn't "*bitter water*" that was the problem, but, there was **no** water at all! Here was a familiar situation to the time the water was "*bitter*." God had provided before, how did they react this time? Again, their response was negative, they complained!

God told Moses to strike the rock at Mount Horeb, and water gushed out. Moses named the place "*Meribah*," meaning "*tempting God to slay us*," for it was here they said, "*Is God going to take care of us or not?*" God said, "*Take another lap in the wilderness.*"

The wilderness, from Egypt to Canaan, can be crossed on foot in **eleven days!** It took Israel **forty years**, as each lap - each confrontation with a problem - they complained instead of trusting God.

Their rebellion hardened. They murmured and complained all the way across the desert, and when they finally arrived at the border of the Promise Land, and saw it had fortified cities

and giants, they refused to enter in.

A second alternative for Israel was to die in the wilderness, their bones bleached in the hot sun.

Ten times Israel had tried God's patience and, so, finally the laps gave out. Scripture tells us that their hearts were hardened in rebellion and, therefore, God lost patience with them.

They did not come into the fullness of **PROVISION**. This does not mean the loss of their deliverance from Egypt's bondage. They were no longer slaves in Egypt, however, most of them never arrived at the provision God promised them!

Our Christian walk should be something more than just repeated forgiveness for doing wrong all the time. It ought to be, first a willingness to do God's will, and then, obedience to it.

If we harden our hearts in the wilderness experience, the second alternative will be our end - our bones will bleach in the wilderness - we will perish in the problem and never come into the fullness of provision.

This does not mean a loss of salvation, God forgave the Israelites for their rebellion, **BUT** He refused to allow them to enter into the Promise-Land.

Note, how Moses pleaded with God to pardon their sins and God answered:

Numbers 14:20-23, *"The LORD replied, 'I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed Me and tested Me ten times - not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated Me with contempt will ever see it.'"*

God forgave them! They did not lose their salvation, however, ***they lost the opportunity to receive the fulfillment of the promise!***

Their bones bleached in the wilderness. What a sad spectacle that was. They perished "*spiritually*." This becomes *our alternative* - **IF**, we continually respond negatively to the problems confronting us on our many laps around the wilderness.

If there is continual resistance to God, we may come to a point of no return in God's dealings with us. Listen to this turning point in Israel's life:

Numbers 14:36-42, "So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it - these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly. Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. 'We have sinned,' they said. 'We will go up to the place the LORD promised.' But Moses said, 'Why are you disobeying the Lord's

command? This will not succeed! Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies'."

What a fearful thought! God forgave them - and God will forgive us, **BUT** unless we allow Him to prepare us, that is, accept fully His principles and His problems - **He cannot bring us into the Promise-Land!**

How tragic it is, Christians who know God's promises, spend their lives wondering in the wilderness - unable to ever see these promises turned into provision. In the end, their bones bleached in the wilderness!

The third alternative is to stand and enter into the Promise-Land. Only two of the Israelites of this first generation - Caleb and Joshua, fulfilled that. They were the spies that had seen the fortified cities and the armed giants with their own eyes, but they remembered God's promise and were confident that He would deliver the land into their hands.

Forty years later, Joshua and Caleb led the new generation across the River Jordan into the Promise-Land!

When we fail on our first "*lap around*," there will be another opportunity to face the same principle. God gives us another choice between standing on His Word or refusing to obey Him.

Our problem is often we do not recognize a situation as God's confrontation with a problem until we have failed it once or twice!

God is patient and permits us another lap and this continues until we have succeeded in the problem, or we become so hardened that another lap will make no difference whatsoever.

The laps become gradually more severe, or obvious, in order to bring a recognition of wrong reaction. God doesn't want to press us into a severe problem, just for hardship sake along and, if we can only understand the principle and succeed in rejecting the temptation to disobey the first time around, we are ready to *move right into the provision without delay*. God longs to show us that a difficult situation is always a doorway to the Promise-Land - when we are willing to meet His conditions!

HOW WE COME THROUGH THE PROBLEM (our wilderness)
DEPENDS ON OUR RESPONSE TO TEMPTATION
(Remember: "*Temptation*" means "*putting to the proof*")

What is being "*put to the proof*" is our willingness to be totally yielded or obedient to God's Word.

God gives us His Word (the Promise) and establish His Principle in our understanding. Then, temptation comes (the Problem). During the time of temptation, God's Principle will always be questioned. - (That is the essence of what temptation is!)

The "*Temptation*" (or Problem) is the believer's journey through the wilderness. Here, there is always the question of doubting God's Word or His intentions. It always seeks to

dishonor God!

Temptation came to Eve in the form of a question, "*Hath God said . . .?*" Thus, the first question was designed to test Eve to see if she remembered what God had said. (See Genesis 3:1-3).

If the believer knows God's Word, Satan's question will throw doubt on the validity of God's Word, or intentions, to do as He said!

Notice Satan's next approach to Eve in Genesis 3:4, "*You'll not die. God knows that as soon as you eat of the fruit, you will become like Him.*"

Satan got Eve to question God's character by saying to her, "*God doesn't want you to be as smart as He is, or to enjoy life as much!*"

Satan through temptation, strikes at the heart of the matter and the believer is forced to make a decision. ***Will he believe God's Word and obey Him, or will he ignore God's Word and follow his own inclinations?***

God allows circumstances to come in the believer's way in order for him to face this question because, until it has been faced, there is always the possibility of "*double-mindedness*," "*self-will*," "*ego*" or "*weakness*," to be hiding in the believer's heart.

This question must be faced and answered by all of us - and in all major areas of our lives! God says, "*If you do these things that I command you, you will live and eat the good of the land.*"

We all have heard the same question that Eve heard - "*Did God really say that?*" - *Those rules were made by a God Who is mean and doesn't want you to have fun!*"

Satan's question suggests that our own way is the easier and better way - while God's way is difficult, hard and could not possibly lead to the fulfillment of our dreams and ambitions.

While we are in the grips of temptation, this question will present itself in the form of deception, rationalization and excuses and we will find that our reason and our senses are likely to be in direct opposition to God's Word.

Temptation isn't real unless it involves the possibility of failure, a moment where we face the issue squarely and it is almost a toss-up which way we will take. Temptation looks so sweet - so sensible - so logical - we are on the verge of trading what it offers for what God has said. When we have faced that kind of decision, and made the right choice, we have moved from "*lip service to God*" to wholehearted willingness to obey Him regardless of what it may cost.

Satan's questions will suggest a clever twisting of God's instructions. **Therefore, it is essential that we clearly understand what God says in the first place!** It is important that the

believer familiarize himself with God's Word. It is our guidebook on our journey through the wilderness to the Promise-Land. If we follow the law of the "Four P's," we need the Bible to check us at every point along the way.

CHECK THE PROMISES!

Is the promise which I am claiming - according to God's Word? We must not take a promise out of context or accept a personal promise which we assume is from God without checking it against the character and principle of the Bible.

It is possible to have a "*strong desire*" for something and ask God for it with intensity, even "*feel*" that God is telling us that He will grant our prayer, however, that is not enough! Always check your desire against what the Bible has to say. If your "*feeling*" is *inconsistent* with either God's character or God's Word - then the promise is a false one!

In checking God's promises, make sure you are not standing on the wrong promise. God will not promise you anything in contradiction to His own Word. Stand on God's Word against your feelings, emotions and rationalizations. We must keep our eyes on Him instead of what our senses or reason tell us.

If we give in to the temptation to have a "*poor me, pity party,*" we will only earn another lap through the problem"

When God says He will take us to a Promise-Land, we can only get there if we follow His instructions. Satan's questions will always suggest an alternate path, or method.

THE DELICATE BALANCE OF TEMPTATION

God gave Israel the promise and the principle and placed the problem as a preparation for receiving the provision.

Remember, the **4 P's - PROMISE, PRINCIPLE, PROBLEM and PROVISION**

As in Israel's experience, so with us. Central to the problem is temptation - with Satan's questions bombarding us, presenting us with the choice of obeying or disobeying God's Word.

Does God tempt man?

Many quote James 1:13 to prove that God does not tempt a man. This verse states, "*When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.*" What James 1:13 is saying is that **God never tempts a man to do wrong** [One translation renders this verse as: ". . . God never wants to do wrong and never tempts anyone else to do it."]

"Temptation" means to "*put to the proof*" for good or for malicious purpose.

GOD NEVER TEMPTS A MAN FOR MALICIOUS PURPOSE

However, God *does* tempt a man - (puts him to the proof) - for good purposes. God puts us to the test in order to prepare us to receive the good things He has promised us!

2 Chronicles 32:31 states, '*God left him (Hezekiah) to himself in order to test (tempt) him and to know everything that was in his heart - to see what he was really like.*'

The Bible says God "*left*" Hezekiah. How can this be consistent with the many passages stating that God will never leave us or forsake us? [Psalm 139:8-10, for instances] Yet, God "*left*" Hezekiah to test him and see what he was really like. We must come to see the difference between God's omnipresence and our conscious presence of Him.

God "*left*" Hezekiah only in the sense that He removed Hezekiah's awareness of His presence. God was still there, but Hezekiah could not "*feel*" Him . . . could not sense Him.

If we "*feel*" God there with us all the time and have that wonderful assurance of His presence - **we would never be tempted to distrust Him in the problem!**

1. God gives us His **PROMISE**
2. God teaches us the **PRINCIPLE**
3. Then, God, at times, will withdraw an awareness of His presence and we enter the **PROBLEM**

The believer is faced with temptation and Satan's question . . . "*Are you sure God cares about you?*" The believer may answer, "*Well, I think He does!*" Satan counters with, '*But, you don't feel Him around anymore, do you?*' The believer comes back with, "*No . . . but . . .*" Satan continues, "*You see, God doesn't really care. He left you to yourself in the middle of this terrible situation, didn't He?*"

HERE IS TEMPTATION IN DELICATE BALANCE. WHEN GOD WITHDRAWS THE BELIEVER'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS PRESENCE, AND PERMITS SATAN TO COME WITH HIS QUESTIONS.

If Eve had "*felt*" the presence of God in the Garden of Eden, there, no doubt, would not have been a problem. As she walked up to the tree, she would have heard God saying, "*Now, Eve, remember, that's the tree I told you not to eat of. Be careful, because the beautiful creature with the smooth voice is the devil trying to make you disobey Me and get you into trouble.*"

God's purpose in withdrawing our consciousness of His presence is to make us face temptation and the question on the basis of His principle alone!

If the Israelites had "*felt*" the power of God's presence when Moses left them to go up on Mount Sinai, they would never have been faced with the temptation to make an image of a golden calf. If the children of Israel had a consciousness of God's presence was with them, assuring them, '*Here I am, My children. Don't worry. I'll always be with you and you will always be able to feel Me near you.*'

If God is to reveal to us what is really in our hearts, He must withdraw from us the sense-experience of His presence. Then, Satan is permitted to go to work with questions - and we are in the middle.

THE BALANCE DEPENDS UPON US! We are forced to choose between Satan's questions and God's Word. If we allow evil desires in our heart to rule and respond to Satan's suggestions, we will fail. Satan cannot succeed in drawing us away from God's instructions unless there is already a measure of "*double-mindedness*" in us. That indecisiveness is often all Satan needs to draw us away from God's instruction.

In John 14:30 Jesus said, "*Satan is coming, and he has no claim on Me, he has nothing in common with Me, there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, he has no power over Me.*" - (Amplified)

Satan only succeeds in tempting us in areas where we have something in common with him. There is where he has legal claim and can exert power. God wants to bring any such areas to the surface in order to cleanse them and fill us with His love . . .

. . . *temptation serves that purpose!*

James 1:13 states, "*And remember, when someone wants to do wrong, it is never God who is tempting him, for God never wants to do wrong and never tempts anyone else to do it.*"

- GOD NEVER TEMPTS A MAN TO DO WRONG!

Verse 14 states, "*Everyone is tempted when, by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.*" Another translation renders:

"Temptation is the pull of man's own evil thoughts and wishes."

The "*data*" of evil thoughts and wishes one programs his mental computer with - is the very material Satan uses to draw him away from God's instructions!

GOD GIVES HIS PROMISES, EXPLAINS HIS WORKING PRINCIPLE, HOWEVER, WHENEVER THE BELIEVER GETS INTO THE PROBLEM, GOD MAY REMOVE THE BELIEVER'S AWARENESS OF HIS PRESENCE. GOD SAYS, "*I WILL BE WITH YOU, HOWEVER, YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS BE AWARE OF IT. IT MAY SEEM AS IF YOU ARE ALONE, FACING THE TEMPTATION AND SATAN'S QUESTIONS WITHOUT MY PRESENCE. IT IS NECESSARY THAT I DO THIS THAT YOU MIGHT SEE WHAT I SEE IN YOUR HEART. I PROMISE YOU THAT - OVER IN THE PROMISE LAND YOU WILL ONCE AGAIN "FEEL" MY PRESENCE - (PROVISION).*

Some believers are like to young man who, after going through the wedding ceremony, turned to his brand-new wife and said, "*Honey, I don't feel married, do you?*" To which she replied, "*Dear, you'd better adjust your feelings to fit the facts.*"

When God allows the believer to sense His presence, it is on either side of the problem. In fact, the absence of a sensation of God's presence is one of characteristics of the time in the problem. If the believer panics during the time of his problem, (as did the Israelites), and cry out for God to come and change the situation, God may do just that, however, the result may be

another lap around the mountain and an extended stay in the wilderness.

When God seems to withdraw His presence, Satan is allowed to come near with his questions. The believer is the one who stands in the delicate balance of temptation, and the outcome depends upon his decision. Satan's questions will always appeal to what is in the believer's heart, and it can be a frightening thing to recognize what is hiding down there.

There is within everyone a certain curiosity about evil!

Before the believer can move into his Promise-Land he must be prepared and the "goodness of God" becomes more evident through circumstances which he has faced. What strength and assurance the believer can gain as his eyes are opened to the possibilities that are his as he moves out into the promises of God.

WHAT IS THE "PROMISED LAND"?

The believer's "Promise-Land," which God promises today is not a geographical location, as it was in Exodus to the children of Israel, but, rather, it is a "spiritual reality." The "Promise-Land" is *a place of rest where the believe has ceased from his own labors and is able to enjoy the provisions God has made for him.*

God promised Israel that they would "dwell in cities they didn't build, enjoy fruit from orchards they didn't plant, drink water from wells they didn't dig. God said, "If you will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, **then** you will be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine; and you will be unto Me a **KINGDOM** of priests, and a holy nation."

WE ARE TO POSSESS THE "SPIRITUAL REALITY" OF THE PROMISED-LAND

The spiritual reality of the believer's "Promise-Land" is described in Romans 8!

- A life without guilt and condemnation
- A life in joint heirs with Christ
 - All things work out for the believer's best
 - God will give the believer freely of all things
 - Living more than conquerors through Christ
 - Nothing separating the believer from God's love in Christ

The entire 8th chapter of Romans is a tremendous declaration of the victorious Christian life God has made available to the believer.

In the book of Romans we have a pattern demonstrated of the "LAW OF THE 4 P's"

PROMISE	PRINCIPLE	PROBLEM	PROVISION
Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8

THE PROMISE

Romans 5:17 states, *"For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man . . . [Adam] . . . how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."*

The contrast is between sin and death reigning in the believer's life, or righteousness and life. Which will it be?

The "*promise*" is that **Christ's righteousness will enable the believer to reign in this life!** His righteousness will enable the believer to reign over the circumstances in which he finds himself - at home, work, in school, everywhere! The believer can reign amidst conflict, confusion and problems!

THE PRINCIPLE

How can the "*promise*" become a reality in the believer's life? Believers are to "*reign*" through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:5-6, *"If we have been united with Him [Christ], like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."*

Christ's righteousness reigning within the believer is made possible by what Christ has already done for us. His substitutionary death for us is a past reality, an established fact. By accepting what Christ has done for the believer *personally* - he is indeed dead in the sense that his natural, sin-loving self no longer rules over him. He needs not be a slave of sin. **HE HAS BEEN GIVEN THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE!** The option is his and the principle tells him how he can use it.

Romans 6:11-13, *"In the same way, count yourselves dead [unresponsive] to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves [completely] to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."*

Don't miss the action words here, what the believer must do . . . and must **not** do! "*count yourselves*" . . . "*alive to God*" . . . "*do not let*" . . . "*offer yourselves completely*" . . . "*as instruments of righteousness.*"

The believer is to do basically two things: (1) Refuse to respond in the old way to sinful desires, and (2) Give himself totally to God.

Romans 6:16, *"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"* (verse 19), *"Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness."*

Note: ". . . you must let yourself be slaves to all that is right and holy."

HOW DO WE BECOME SLAVES TO ALL THAT IS RIGHT AND HOLY?

It is not obtained by starting out to "try," in one's own efforts to be good! God has given another method, found in Romans 7:6: "*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*" Another translation renders this verse as: "*Now you need no longer worry about... the laws because you `died' while in their captivity, and now you can really serve God, no in the old way, mechanically obeying a set of rules, but in the new way [with all of your hearts and minds].*"

Note: The believer is told that God has provided a way for him to do His will, a way to live within His law. The believer is to actively resist evil desires, and just as actively give himself wholeheartedly to God and **Christ will fulfill the law for him.**

Jesus said, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*"

[Matthew 5:17-19].

Jesus came to fulfill the law - to make it come true *in us!*

When the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans, that the believer is free from the law's demands, he did not mean to imply that the law was not valid anymore. He only meant that believers need not struggle to keep the law in **their own strength**, because now they can put themselves into God's hands and **let** Christ fulfill the law in their lives!

Remember, the principle for Israel was - to inherit cities they didn't build, enjoy fruit they didn't plant and drink from wells they didn't dig!

BELIEVERS MUST LET GOD DO FOR THEM WHAT THEY
CANNOT POSSIBLY DO FOR THEMSELVES, AND THAT
INCLUDES KEEPING THE LAW!

THE PROBLEM

Between the "*principle*" and the "*provision*" is the "*problem*" in order to reveal any tendency in the believer to do his own thing instead of abiding by God's instructions.

The problem Paul describes is a common one for all believers. It is what happens once they have become aware of God's will and find themselves incapable of doing it.

Romans 7:21-24, "*So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's*

law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

What did the "*problem*" reveal in Paul?

Paul knew God's will and he wanted to do it, but he could not! There was a tendency to want to keep the law in his own strength. He was once a Pharisee, and knew all about using *will power* to keep the rules and regulations.

You and I are self-willed people, set on being "*good*" in our own strength. This is a subtle rebellion - the desire to earn our own salvation - to be able to say, "*Look at me, I'm keeping the law. I don't do this or that.*"

The dangerous trap of "*rule-keeping*" will keep the believer from ever enjoying the fulfillment of the law in the Promised-Land!

GOD ALLOWS SITUATIONS WHERE THE BELIEVER'S OWN EFFORTS AT BEING GOOD WILL HOPELESSLY FAIL - IN ORDER TO REVEAL THIS TENDENCY DEEP WITHIN HIM

The believer struggles with hidden envy, pride, resentment, covetousness, or other powerful tendencies that keeps him bound and suffering in the "*wilderness*" of his problem. The predicament is, he knows what God wants him to do but he isn't able to do it!

Paul says in Romans 7:25, "*Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord, He has set me free!*"

The only way the believer can come through the wilderness (the problem) into the provision is to let Jesus Christ do it!

This is the principle Paul embraced! When the believer finds himself in the problem, he must apply the principle he has learned:

1. Recognize and admit his own failure
2. Resist the pull of wrong desires
3. Turn himself over to God to be used for His purpose.

Letting Jesus do God's perfect will in and through us, is the **only way** one can come through the wilderness into the Promise-Land!

THE PROVISION

When:

1. The believer's knowledge of the "**Promise,"** and
2. Practice of the "**Pinciple" has been . . .**
3. Tested and refined through "**Problems,"** the believer is then,
4. Able to enter the "**Provision,"** the Promised-Land!

This Promise-Land for the believer is defined in the 8th chapter of Romans, where various "*pieces*" of the promised inheritance is found.

When Israel entered Canaan, they found that **each piece of land** to be "*possessed*" separately.

The principles and the problems had to come before each individual section of the land could become theirs.

Romans 8:1-4, "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the*

sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."

Note: (1) The believer lives without condemnation
 (2) He is free from the vicious circle of sin and death, and
 (3) He is able to obey God's laws

These can become spiritual realities as the believer applies the principle:

- 1. Resist his old nature,**
- 2. Submit to God and**
- 3. let Christ live in him and for him.**

"*Problems*" will confront the believer with the temptation to do otherwise. Satan's questions will be aimed at the believer, "*What do you mean, no condemnation? You are guilty and you know it. Your not good enough, your not free from sin, and you certainly aren't obeying God's law! You better try a little harder to be good!*"

If the believer crumples and submits to guilt he will be forced to "*take another lap.*"

Instead of giving in to guilt feelings, the believer must practice God's principle and respond, "*Sure, I am guilty, **BUT** Christ is without guilt, and it is His life in me that gives me right standing with God. I want to do God's will. I will not give in to my doubts and guilt-feelings. I trust Jesus to change me. I am **NOT** under condemnation. I am free from the vicious circle of sin and death, and I am obeying God's law in Christ - and this is true regardless of how often I slip or how guilty I feel.*"

Continuing with "*The believer's provisions in Romans, chapter 8*)

There are other "*pieces*" of the believer's inheritance presented in Romans 8. Let's look at some of these wonderful provisions that is the believer's for the taking!

Romans 8:5, "*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*"

4. God-pleasers.

The believer cannot please God no matter how hard he tries, however, God has provided a way. If the believer will follow His instructions, he will find himself doing the things that please God, quite effortlessly!

Romans 8:6, "*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*"

The Amplified Bible renders this verse as: "*Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death - death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin. both here and hereafter. But the mind of the Holy Spirit is life and soul-peace [both now and forever].*"

5. The believer can have life and soul-peace

The believer longs for peace! Soul-peace is a peace that comes through one's spirit, saturating one's whole being: personality, mind, emotions. Instead of feeling frustration, tension, worry or restlessness, this peace brings the believer quietness in the midst of a turbulent world. It is the believer's inheritance - *in Christ!*

Romans 8:9, "*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*"

6. The indwelling Holy Spirit can control the believer

It is possible to be a born-again, Christian, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and yet, the believer not let the Holy Spirit control his life. Control of the Holy Spirit is **not** an automatic feature of the Christian's life. The control of the Holy Spirit can only come as the believer gives up his "*self-will*," resists the control of his lower nature and turns himself over completely to Christ's control.

This "*control of the Holy Spirit*" is not something that is done once and for all by a single decision, but, rather, it must be repeated **daily**, often in the heat of a problem!

Romans 8:11, "*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*"

7. The Spirit can quicken the believer's mortal body

Here is a promised of divine "*quickenings*," giving the believer new life, a new surge of energy.

Romans 8:13, "*For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*"

The Amplified Bible states, "*if through the power of the Holy Spirit you are habitually putting to death - making extinct, deadening - the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall (really and genuinely) live forever.*"

8. The believer can put to death the evil deeds of to body

The believer is to habitually put to death - resist and deny - the old habits and turn himself over to Christ's control instead.

Romans 8:14, " . . . *because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*"

9. The believer can be lead by the Spirit of God

Romans 8:15, "*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, `Abba, Father.'*"

The Amplified Bible states, "*For [the Spirit which] you have now received is not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption - the Spirit producing sonship - in [the bliss of] which we cry Abba! [that is,] Father!'"*

10. The believer can know the spirit of adoption

Romans 8:16, "*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*"

11. The Spirit tells the believer he is God's child.

Romans 8:17, "*Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*"

12. The believer is "joint heir" with Christ Jesus

Romans 8:20-21, "*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*"

13. The believer can have glorious freedom from sin

Paul speaks of complete freedom from sin the believer will enjoy in the future, after the resurrection, however, he also speaks of the believer's "*substantial*" freedom from sin which he can enjoy in this life!

Romans 8:23, "*Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*"

The Amplified Bible states, "*And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us full rights as His children, including the new bodies He has promised us - bodies that will never be sick again and will never die.*"

14. The believer is promised the redemption of his body

This is to be experienced fully when Christ comes again, however, there is a measure of fulfillment even now. The believer's dying body can experience greater life!

Romans 8:26, "*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*"

15. The Spirit helps with the believer's daily problems and prayers

Romans 8:28, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*"

16. Everything happens for the believer's good

The believer must be careful when he quotes this verse, "*all things work together for good,*" because, it is possible, that those who refuse see their problem as a part of God's plan for good, will recite this verse to avoid facing what God is saying to them.

God's plan is to bring the believer from the **P**romise into the **P**rovision, by way of the **P**roblem. No problem can just "*pop-up*" and thwart God's intention, but, rather, it is inevitable part of God's divine plan.

***All that happens to the believer is meant to work for his good
- including the things that he has habitually called "bad."***

There springs from the believer's "*old nature*" his reasoning and understanding without the Holy Spirit's enlightening. The believer must deliberately resist these old thought patterns - confess them as sin - and ask God to take them away and replace them with the ability to look at "**A-L-L**" things as a part of His good plan!

This ability is the believer's in Christ Jesus

Romans 8:29, "*For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*"

17. The believer is to be conformed to Christ's image

The believer cannot accomplish this by "*trying*" to be like Christ, but, rather, he can only be like Christ to the degree that Christ lives His life him.

Romans 8:31, "*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?*"

18. The believer can know that God is always on his side

The believer needs never to feel alone. God is always on his side!

Romans 8:32, "*He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?*"

19. God freely gives the believer all things!

Romans 8:34, "*Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*"

20. Christ will plead the believer's cause

The believer must not remain stubborn in his self-sufficiency, but yield himself to Christ - to receive the full benefits of his provision.

Romans 8:35-36, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

21. Nothing can keep Christ's love from the believer!

The list of circumstances is a very inclusive description of any wilderness area the believer might encounter. The temptation is for the believer to feel that God has left him or doesn't love him. On the contrary, it is only through very difficult circumstances that the believer learns to rely on God's constant presence and never-ending love.

Romans 8:37, "*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*"

22. The believer can be more than conquerors

The victory is already the believer's through Christ Jesus!

Romans 8:38-39, "*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

23. Nothing can separate the believer from God's love

HERE IS THE BELIEVER'S "*PROMISE-LAND*" - HE IS MEANT TO LIVE THERE!

Many Christian share Paul's problem of Romans 7. They know what God wants them to do, however, they flounder in the problem, unable to obey!

The answer to the predicament is to quit "*trying*" so hard in their own strength and let

When the believer learns to apply that principle to all of his problems, he can become a permanent resident in the Promise-Land!

CHRIST IN TEMPTATION

The Bible tells us that Jesus "*was tempted in every point as we are.*" Jesus' temptation was the same as ours!

Jesus, too, was given the **PROMISE**, taught the **PRINCIPLE**, then God withdrew from His Son the consciousness of His presence, and Jesus as exposed to all the forces of hell. Jesus endured the **PROBLEM**. Satan's questions were thrown at our Lord before He could receive His Father's **PROVISION**.

The temptation of Jesus would not have been real had it not contained the possibility of failure. Anything less would have been contrary to the principles of God.

The Israelites were chose of God to enter the Promised Land, yet they failed to come into their full provision. Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, **could**, conceivably, have failed as well!

Notice in the Gospels that the temptation of Jesus occurred immediately *after* Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and *before* He entered His ministry as Messiah.

Failure in the **PROBLEM** wouldn't have changed the fact that He was God's Son who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, but it would have adversely effected His role as Messiah - His **PROVISION**!

To think, "*If I could only be full of the Holy Spirit, then I would not have any more problems,*" is a mistake many believers make!

As we look at the life of Jesus, we see God wants every believer to be emptied of "*self*" and "*filled with His Holy Spirit.*" Whenever one prays to be filled with the Holy Spirit, they shouldn't expect that their problems will all melt away, but, rather, expect **new** problems.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit is the potential (or *promise*), however, this promise must be put to the test before the believer can safely come into his provision!

When a spaceship is built, before it can take off for outer space, it is tested under full power, to see if all systems are go. If any defects show up during the test, the part is repaired or exchanged.

When God fills us with the Holy Spirit, we are put to the test to see if our systems are all "go," then we will be ready to be launched into the mission God has for us!

Scripture establishes the fact that Jesus was well acquainted with God's Word (the **PROMISE**)! When He was baptized in water, He was also, "*filled with the Holy Spirit*," however, the preparation for His ministry was not complete.

Luke 3:21-22, "*When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased."* Luke 4:1-2, "*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry.*"

Jesus, after just being baptized in water and filled with the Holy Spirit, was "*driven*" by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan!

Many feel that because they experience an infilling of the Holy Spirit that they are ready and prepared for "*doing the work of the God*," and fail to see that **a trip to the wilderness and a confrontation with the enemy is a necessary part of their preparation for ministry!**

Jesus was in the wilderness, alone with Satan, for forty days and nights without eating, and the Bible says He was hungry. God, the Father, had withdrawn the consciousness of His presence from Jesus.

SATAN'S FIRST ATTACK - CAME IN THE REALM OF PHYSICAL PROVISION

It had to do with Jesus' very real hunger pains, His feelings of fatigue and discomfort. Satan presented the question, "*If you are God's Son, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.*" Jesus knew He was the son of God and perfectly capable of turning that stone into bread, and He was extremely hungry, however, more than hunger was at stake here. Satan was suggesting that Jesus use His power *to satisfy His own need*, implying that His greatest need was for bread.

Satan was suggesting, "*Jesus, use your power to bring temporary satisfaction.*" The temptation was for Jesus to think of "*self*," and use His authority to ask for blessings from a selfish motive.

Satan suggest to the believer, "*You need a bigger house, a better job, more money, and God will be glorified when you prosper, so go ahead and ask for these stones to be turned to bread.*"

Jesus' answer to Satan was, "*It is written in the Scriptures: `Other things in life are more important than physical bread.'*"

Jesus chose to remain hungry, thereby, being obedient to God's Word, rather than to satisfy His own physical need by provoking God.

You will notice that Jesus quoted from the Scriptural account when the Israelites, in the

wilderness; were tested in the same way that Jesus was being tested, however, they *failed!* The account is found in Deuteronomy 8:2-3, it states,

"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

The Israelites gave in to temptation and begged for bread and, as a consequence, they were unable to enter into the Promised Land, however, Jesus, in the wilderness, won the victory and the provision.

Luke 4:2 states, "...*He was hungry.*" Satan, knowing this temporary vulnerability, moved in for an attack on Jesus' *physical* need.

Wasn't this a valid solution to a personal problem?

In this study, "***Motivation; from frustration to joy,***" showing how the believer can enter into God's Promise-Land of provision, we must not miss this important principle:

The true purpose of God's miraculous power is **not** to bring *temporary* satisfaction. The "*physical*" (or "*natural*") purpose of God's performing a miracle is, of itself, **not** the significant thing, but, rather, the true significance of any miracle can only be understood by "*every word that proceeded from the mouth of God!*"

In the believer's journey through the "*wilderness*" into God's Promise-Land, he must not yield to the temptation to become spiritually irresponsible - in an attempt to circumvent God's true purpose in favor of a supernatural display of power to meet one's physical needs.

THIS IS A VERY REAL DANGER!

Remember this, miracles, in themselves, are not what is significant, but, rather, they significance lies in a knowledge and understanding of Divine truth! God, of course, performs miracles today, however, the question is, not "*does*" God perform miracles today, but "*why*" does God perform miracles today?

God's promises are not given in order for the believer to see how far he can stretch them, but, rather, they are given, so that, while in the normal course of the believer's Christian living, he is in a situation of extreme circumstance, **then** his extremity becomes God's opportunity to supply his needs.

Let me illustrate:

Let's say that a certain highway has a sharp curve at the point where there is a deep precipice, so the Highway Department has placed a fence along the curve in order to protect anyone driving along

that stretch of road.

What is one supposed to do? Are they to get as large a truck as possible, fill it with a heavy load, and then drive it at a high speed into the retaining wall just to try and see if the "*promising possibilities*" of the fence is true or not?

No, of course not! The fence is put there to protect anyone from any *unusual* circumstances, and, in the event that someone is driving along that road and a tire blows, bouncing the off the retaining fence, the fence **will** prevent the car from going over the precipice!

WHAT ARE MIRACLES?

A miracle is a "*supernatural*" phenomenon occurring that is contradictory to the normal laws of nature. God does not perform miracles **just to satisfy a physical need one might have!** Of course, wheat grown in the field to provide bread is a miraculous working of God, however, because this is within God's "*natural*," established, laws of nature, is not considered a "*miracle*."

The book of Hebrews speaks of the believer's Christian growth. The main message of this book of Hebrews is the believer's development of a Christ-like character.

Hebrews 2:3 states, "*How shall we escape if we ignore . . . [neglect, disregard, lay aside, pay no attention to] . . . such a great salvation?*" (That is, this Christian development which God seeks to work out in the believer's life) Hebrews 2:3 continues, "*This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.*" Verse 4 states, "*God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various **miracles**, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.*"

Miracles were to fulfill God's *purpose*, to demonstrate God's *purpose*, not His power.

Satan's first temptation to Jesus in the wilderness was to draw His attention to His "*physical*" need (bread), that lose sight of His Father's purpose and kingdom.

Satan would be delighted if the believer would get so interested in miracles and a display of God's power, that he loses sight of God's purpose and kingdom!

Another interesting fact is found in Hebrews 11, where the great "*heros*" of faith are mentioned, one looks in vain to find even a few miracles mentioned in their lives. What one does see is that their faith was tested in their ability to endure cruel afflictions. They did not even "*see*" the results of their faith in this life, or even any evidence of the receiving the promises **in this life!**

Hebrews 11:36-40 states, "*Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned ; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in*

deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."

God does perform miracles today in supplying needs, however, He is not at our beck and call to perform miracles on demand. He has a purpose behind each one, and that is the advancement of His kingdom.

SATAN HAS ANOTHER MEANS OF ATTACK IN HIS TEMPTATION OF JESUS, AND THAT WAS TO PUT "MATERIAL THINGS" OF THIS EARTH AHEAD OF ONE'S WORSHIP OF GOD

Speaking of the second temptation of Jesus, Luke 4:5-7 states, "*The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And said to Him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be Yours.'*"

Who and what a man worships is the final test of his heart.

Satan knew Jesus' appointed role as Messiah and ultimate ruler of the world, however, he also knew that Jesus had to go by the "*way of the cross*," the way of suffering, rejection and death. Therefore, in this second temptation, Satan offered Jesus a *compromise*, an easy way out.

This was no *easy* temptation for Jesus to face. He was alone in the wilderness, tired, hungry and not conscious of the presence of His heavenly Father. Satan appeared in all his power, beauty and light and he made this temptation as appealing as he possibly could. ***Doesn't Satan always?***

Jesus' reply to this second temptation was, "*It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only*" (Luke 4:8). **Again**, replying to this second temptation, Jesus refers to the Scripture record of the Israelites in the wilderness.

This passage is found in Exodus 20:2-3, and reads, "*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.*"

In the context of this passage of Exodus 20, Israel was exposed to temptation when they no longer "*sensed*" God's presence with them, and so, they disobeyed God's command to worship Him *only* and to have *no other* gods before Him, and they worshiped the golden image of a calf.

They failed and lost God's provision, however, Jesus obeyed God's Word and won the believer's provision!

This second temptation of Jesus in the wilderness was a valid offer Satan made to Jesus because Satan **is** the "*prince of this world*," the "*god of this world*" the "*prince and power of the air*," and "*the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" Satan does have limited ownership of this earth.

- (Dominion of this earth was given to Adam and Eve by God, however, they turned it over to Satan when they decided to obey him) - This Satan offers to Jesus if He would bow down and worship Him.

All the pull of Satanic magnetism was there in this temptation!

Satan can "trip up" the believer in his journey into God's Promise-Land by getting him to focus his attention on things other than God's kingdom. If the believer would be motivated from frustration to joy, he must put God first in his life and worship Him only!

Jesus did not get involved in some philosophic discussion, nor ask for any opportunity to "think it over." Without any compromise, Christ responded instantly and straightforward. His answer was clear, total and final. He said, "No, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and **Him only** shalt thou serve.'"

In this second temptation, Satan was saying, "The way to gain the kingdoms of the world is to worship him," however, Jesus answered, "The path to real fulfillment is to turn your life over to the Living God!"

We see in these temptations of Jesus in the wilderness:

1. Satan attacks the believer in the realm of attempting to **use God** for his own personal, physical, needs.
2. And, Satan attacks the believer in the area of "***worshipping***" material things around him, instead of putting God first in his life.

We, now, come to a third means of attack of Satan:

Luke 4:9-12, "The devil led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If You are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: He will command His angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' Jesus answered, 'It says: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan takes his Scriptural reference out of context. This is perhaps the most subtle and dangerous form of temptation for sincere believers . . .

the suggestion that there is Scriptural authority for the proposed action!

Satan suggested to Jesus that He do something spectacular to demonstrate His supernatural power and impress people! For Jesus to jump off the high pinnacle of the Temple roof and be carried to the pavement below by God's angels could certainly launch His mission on earth in a spectacular way.

What was wrong with this suggestion?

Thousands of people were gathered in the Temple courtyard and would probably be in a "religious" state of mind. They, certainly would be deeply impressed, to say the least.

This temptation seemed to be on such a high spiritual plane!

WAS THE PROMISE SATAN QUOTED A VALID PROMISE?

The Scripture Satan quoted comes from Psalms 91:11, where God does promise protection and help to those in impossible circumstances. This 91st Psalm, certainly, has been a source of solace to many in time of need, so what is so wrong with Satan's suggestion?

The problem was this; *Satan takes a valid promise of God and moves it into the realm of the spectacular!* Satan tempted Jesus by saying, "Make a grandstand play . . . become a 'superstar' by making a lasting impression. This is the way (the key) to success in ministry."

There is a big difference in one, "resting in the Lord" as the Source of his ultimate confidence, and from exploiting God's promises in an attempt to show how strong one's faith really is. This second frame of mind will damage one's own soul and hurt the faith of others.

God will "supply my needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus," but **only God's omniscience knows my needs!**

This third temptation of Satan was for Jesus to do a spectacular, unusual, unnatural . . . and quite unnecessary . . . act!

God does provide miraculously, however, for instance, when Jesus fed the five thousand, He didn't do it in a spectacular or unnatural manner. He *could* have turned the stones on the hillside into bread, but, instead He quietly took the loaves and fishes, thanked God for them, and proceeded to divide them among the hungry.

The whole process appeared so natural and simple that those who watched hardly realized a miracle was taking place.

The point is, our human nature just naturally is drawn to the sensational and we must guard against this tendency for the spectacular, directing our desire to see God move in our lives. Satan would rob us of the true move of God by attempting to get us to substitute it with some dramatic event.

The drama of the glitter, glimmer and sparkle that occupies center stage of the secular world can effect the believer's attitude toward God's work and how he feels God should work. He can be, if he is not careful, be drawn toward the spectacular in the demonstration of God's power.

Sincere believers can be drawn into fanaticism of one kind or another, claiming isolated Scripture texts as God's direction for their actions. They look for strange and unusual so-called "miracles" as signs of spirituality.

How can the believer tell whether or not an "urge to do something" which appears to be "spiritual" comes from God, Satan, or is just his own desire?

Questions to ask concerning miracles:

1. Is it in line with God's total program as revealed in the Scripture?
Does it reflect God's character of love and justice?
2. Is it spectacular, unusual or unnatural? If so, be careful because God most often works in simple, natural and intelligible ways.
3. Has God prepared you for it? God does not usually act on the spur of the moment, His Word and intentions are unchanging and eternal. When God wants you to do something, He will prepare you over a period of time, through Scripture, circumstances and impressions. When the time for action comes, you will recognize that God has led you.
4. Is it necessary? This may seem to be a superfluous question, however, the temptation to engage in unnecessary activities "*for the Lord*" (?) is a common one.

When Jesus answered this, Satan's third temptation, He said, "*Do not put the Lord you God to a foolish test.*" He again refers to a Scriptural record where the Israelites were in the wilderness. In the passage of Scripture which Jesus refers to, is where the Children of Israel had been warned not to put God to a foolish test (to "*tempt*" Him), and, again, the children of Israel failed; they asked for a sign that was not God's will - something more spectacular and sensational than what God's plan was - and they "*provoked*" God and lost their provision as a result of it.

Remember, God's dealings with Israel are our
example to learn from - 1 Corinthians 10

Jesus was tempted *in the same realms* as the children of Israel, however, Jesus won! Where they lost, **He won!** Throughout the temptations, Jesus did what they had been instructed to do. He stood on the "*promises*" of God without the conscious awareness of God's presence. When we are tempted, we must do likewise!

In considering this third temptation of Satan to attempt to get Jesus to rely on the spectacular to impress people, let me add something else

It seems many have ceased to believe in the power of prevailing prayer and absolute trust in God to do His work through us, and are depending on public relation promotion! Some have even hired public relation firms, to tailor their image for the news media, to impress the multitudes. Isn't this falling into Satan's temptation of attempting, through the spectacular, to do the work of God?

Jesus' name is famous and known around the world today. He does have "*fame*," not because He "*cast Himself off the Temple*," but, rather, because He gave Himself to fulfill the purpose of God for His life, that of going to the cross and dying for the world. And, that is the **only** way anyone will ever find true fulfillment!

The New Testament is full of calls for diligence and carefulness, lest Christians get the reputation of being fools whose foolishness is based on a false view of Scripture. Some have excused their laziness and irresponsibility by saying, "*They are living by faith*," however, that it is not faith they are exercising, but, rather, they are "*tempting the Lord God*" . . . expecting some spectacular display of God's power to meet their needs.

God give us wisdom and discernment to know the difference between "*faith*" and just plain old human "*presumption*."

- Faith will produce marvelous results in the lives of people!
- Presumption will produce nothing but spiritual disaster!

The reason for the obscurity and deficiency of spiritual discernment, is due to a lack of knowledge of God's Word - His true promises!

1. GOD'S PROMISES MUST NEVER BECOME A SUBSTITUTE FOR FAITHFULNESS

God's Word tells us, "*All things are yours.*" Can that then mean, we can take anything from anyone we want? Of course not, God says we must "*work to support ourselves and our families,*" and we are also told we must be industrious.

God has also promised to "*feed the birds,*" however He does not drop the food in their next, they must go out and scratch for it.

2. OUR INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S PROMISES MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE

Listen carefully! It is possible to revere the promises of God, more than the God Who gave them! One can lose sight of the Person because his eyes are filled with His gifts.

A.B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, wrote,

Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord
 Once it was the feeling, now it is the Word;
 Once His gift I wanted, now the Giver own;
 Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone,
 Once `twas painful trying, now `tis perfect trust
 Once a half salvation, now the uttermost!
 Once `twas ceaseless holding, now He holds me fast
 Once `twas constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.

Once `twas busy planning, now `tis trustful prayer;
 Once `twas anxious caring, now He has the care;
 Once `twas what I wanted, now what Jesus says,
 Once it was constant asking, now `tis ceaseless praise

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
 Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me;
 Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
 Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, now I know He's mine;
 Once my lamps were dying, now they brightly shine;
 Once for death I waited, now His coming hail;
 All my hopes are anchored safe within the veil.

The only way through the "*problem*" (your wilderness) is total reliance on god and His Word (the promises). There is no other assurance of help! God's Word is sufficient! It is, therefore, essential that we be sure of what god has told us in the first place.

Nothing is more tragic than the Christian who stands on "*a*" word of God, taken out of context and twisted by the master deceiver (Satan).

When Satan left Jesus in the wilderness, **God sent angels to care for Him!** [Jesus had been in the wilderness without a sense of the presence of God.] When the angels came to care for Him - the sense of God's concern, love and presence *returned*. Luke 4:14 states, "***then*** Jesus returned to Galilee, full of the Holy Spirit's power . . . "

Note: In Luke 4:1, Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit . . . Who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, now, after the time of testing, He was full of the Holy Spirit's power (verse 14).

Now, Jesus was ready to enter into the *provision* . . . the ministry God had for Him. He was on the "*victory side*" of the *problem*, and could announce to the world that He had come to fulfill what the Scripture promised - (Luke 4:16-21).

WHERE IS THE POWER JESUS PROMISED THE BELIEVER TODAY?

Where is the ability to meet the need of the oppressed, the sick, the blind and the brokenhearted?

Power, as a *promise*, isn't the same as power in action! Between the *Promise* and the realization of power comes the *Principle* and the *Problem*.

VICTORY IN THE PROBLEM TRANSFORMS THE PROMISE INTO POWER

If the believer lacks power, it isn't because God has withheld His promise or broken His Word, but, rather, it is because so few believers have come through the problem *successfully!*

The "*power*" promised is dissipated by repeated laps around the mountain.

Jesus withstood the temptations in the wilderness and because He did, **the way is open for every believer to do the same!**

Every believer can, also, stand on the "*Principle*" of God's "*Promise*," and be prepared to receive the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power is promised to every believer, not in their own strength, **but in Christ's**

THE SERPENTS IN THE WILDERNESS

Temptation in the wilderness serves the purpose of exposing what is really in the believer's heart and is necessary before the believer can have an honest and satisfactory

relationship with God and reach the maturity by which he enters into the provisions of the Promise-Land!

Remember Deuteronomy 8, when God tells Israel why He led them through the wilderness?

*"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands . . . Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, **then** your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today"*

Deuteronomy 8:2, 12-18.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One" (Matthew 6:13).

God *does* lead the believer into temptation in order to reveal what is in his heart. The believer's prayer should be, "Oh, God, let there be nothing in my heart that would cause You to put me to the test." If there is any unconfessed sin, or Satan's suggestions that the believer allows to stay, Satan has an open door.

God allows a "Ways and Means Committee" in the wilderness, especially assigned to bring out the believer's weaknesses. In Israel's situation, God allowed "serpents" to tempt the children of Israel in the wilderness and lead them to perish there. As one studies God's Word, he will realize that the areas of Israel's temptation are major areas where believers will be tested to a greater or lesser degree.

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 states, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

1.

1 Corinthians 1:6, "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

The children of Israel craved meat, although they were being fed adequately every day with

man from heaven. They complained until God became angry. To teach them a lesson, God sent enough manna for them to eat until they became nauseous.

A desire, or craving, for anything other than God, amounts to rejection of Him and, to teach believers God may allow an over abundance of what the believer craves.

[What an effective cure, to get sick on what one craves for]

Until the believer is cured of all inordinate desires for anything other than God and His purposes, the believer will live a life of continual double-mindedness and dissatisfaction.

It just may be that, like the children of Israel, God may provide the opportunity for the believer to satisfy that desire, expose it to where he will either:

1. Give in to the desire and suffer continued laps in the problem, or
2. Confess it, resist it, and choose to give his full allegiance to what God wants for him. Then, he will be ready to receive the provision.

2.

1 Corinthians 10:7, "*Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.'*"

"Idolatry" is lust, or desire, that has come to maturity. This serpent poses a more serious threat than the first serpent. The believer is told to "*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your entire being and will all your might.*" Deuteronomy 6:5.

God, knowing the weakness in the hearts of the children of Israel, permitted them to be exposed to temptation. He had commanded them to love and worship Him only and to keep from making any molten images. Then, God withdrew from their conscious awareness of His presence through the person of His spokesman. He had Moses go up on the mountain. Immediately, the weakness in the children of Israel's hearts came to the surface with full force and they implored Aaron to make them a golden image of a calf to worship.

The molten calf represented the image of Egypt's god, the bull, "*Osiris.*" These ex-slaves cherished the dream of Egypt in their hearts, and whenever they were confronted with a temptation in the wilderness, their first impulse was to go back to the flash-pots they had left behind. This calf was no small thing, it was a sign of Egypt, showing that the children of Israel had withdrawn their allegiance from the invisible Jehovah and was placing it in Osiris to keep from being slain by the Egyptian army.

IDOLATRY INVOLVES ALLEGIANCE TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN GOD!

Idolatry starts out innocently enough. In the heart is a desire to identify with something other than Go and God permits the believer to be tempted with opportunities because to go on with divided loyalty is a frustration, both to the believer and to God.

Jesus said, "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back (to the things behind) is fit for the kingdom of God*" Luke 9:32.

God requires full allegiance, or, the believer will be left with empty promises and

consequently lose the spiritual provision - and the joy - God has promised.

3.

1Corinthians 10:8, "*We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did - and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.*"

This phrase "*sexual immorality*," ("*fornication*," in the King James Translation), is an all-inclusive word, meaning all types of sexual sins, perversion and promiscuity.

Israel ignored God's command and committed sexual sins with the women of Moab. God's anger was aroused and a plague struck down 23,000 of Israel's number.

4.

1Corinthians 10:9, "*We should not test the Lord, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes.*"

The Israelites complained in the wilderness and said they hated "*the insipid manna*" which God had provided for them and, as a result, God sent poisonous snakes among them and many were bitten and died.

The believer tests God's patience when he demands more than the adequate supply God has given. The believer tests, or tempts, the Lord when he is not satisfied with what God has provided for his life and he cries out for something else which he thinks would be better than what God has provided for him.

The believer tests God when he asks for a "*sign*" from Him after God has already made something clear, or, the believer asks God to prove His power when God has already shown enough to establish faith. The believer's faith must be based upon God's **promises**. To put God "*to the proof*" is an expression of doubt and dissatisfaction in the believer's heart.

5.

1 Corinthians 10:10, "*And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel.*"

The Israelites' complaints had hardened into open rebellion and a revolt was started against Moses and God slew the rebels.

Murmuring is perhaps the most dangerous of all the serpents in the wilderness. **A habit of complaining becomes a constant attitude of discontent!** Many complain about circumstances, and that is bad enough, but "*murmuring*" is directed against God.

The murmurer is a pessimist! No matter how things are, he always expects the worst. He feels he has been treated unfairly by God, life, his wife, neighbors, his boss and so on. This negative attitude is demonstrated by a constant stream of criticism directed at everyone and everything.

1 Corinthians 10:11, "*These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.*"

Every believer will face these five serpents . . . *lust, idolatry, fornication, tempting God* and *murmuring* . . . in the wilderness of his problems!

There is the danger of thinking that our personal situation is somehow unique and, therefore, exempt from God's rules and principles, however, God's Word assures us that this just isn't so!

1 Corinthians 10:12-13, "*So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*"

THERE IS NO UNIQUE SITUATION THAT PROVIDES AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULES IN GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THE BELIEVER!

The situations which the believer goes through have been face by others, and are known by God.

1 Corinthians 10:13, teaches, " . . . *no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for He has promised this and will do what He says!*"

Temptation is never meant to break the believer, but, rather, it is means to bring out in him what needs to be exposed. The believer can stand up against any temptation - (That is God's promise!) - even if the problem appears to be overwhelming. The strength of Jesus Christ can take the believer through to victory!

When things get rough, the believer is provided with an escape! " . . . *He (God) will show you how to escape temptations power so that you can bear up patiently against it*" (verse 13).

The only way to the "Promise-Land" is to come successfully through the "Problem" on faith in God's "Promise" alone!

The "Principle" is to yield one's self completely to Christ. The "Promise" is that Christ will supply the strength that will take the believer through the "Problem."

Christ is the only One who ever gained complete victory in temptation, and that victory is ours when we are properly related to Him!

HOW TO POSSESS THE LAND

When the Israelites finally left the wilderness and crossed over the River Jordan into the Promised Land, they faced a reality which the believer, as "*spiritual Israelites*" tend to forget.

THE LAND WAS TILL IN POSSESSION OF THE ENEMY!

There were enemy nations, giants and fortified cities in the land! The believer may enter the Promise-Land, however, that does not mean that he is in full possession of it!

Instant possession of the "*Promise-Land*," or standing spiritual maturity, is *impossible!* Of course, God is capable of giving "*spiritual maturity*" to the believer **at once**, however, the reason God does not is because if He did the believer would be destroyed. Listen to what Moses said to the children of Israel:

"When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations - seven nations larger and stronger than you - Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God" [Deuteronomy 7:1,21].

The believer's "*Promise-Land*" is, also, his **only** "*a little at a time*" because he must have time to grow in the ability to possess it!

Peter had to learn the necessity of "*possessing the Promise-Land - little by little.*" He thought himself ready to enter the land and possess it all, **IMMEDIATELY!** The result: He fell flat on his face!

For three years he has been a disciple of Jesus. He had been given solid training in the "*principles of God*" by the master Teacher. Jesus, on the evening of His betrayal, stated a promise to His followers . . . "*Because you have stood by Me in My trials, I confer on you a kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" Luke 22:28-30

Jesus was explaining what was about to happen after He returns to earth, however, it also has reference to the believer's "*reigning in life*" in the Promise-Land of today - **right now - in this life!**

Note, the verses which follow. Jesus continues to speak . . . "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*" Luke 22:31-32.

Jesus said that Satan would be permitted to come near Simon because he needed to be exposed to temptation. In Simon's heart was something that had to be put to the test before he could enter to Promise-Land!

After Peter had been tested, he would be able to strengthen and build up the faith of his brothers in Christ. If Peter was to become what Jesus wanted him to be, he had to be exposed to the problem - his "*wilderness.*"

The believer must go through the same "*testing.*" Jesus is pleading the believer's cause and praying that his faith will not fail, however, Jesus does **not** pray that the believer be "*kept from*" the problem.

In training our children, we need to teach them about life and about making choices between right and wrong, because there will come a time when they will be exposed to temptation and have to make choices on their own.

As parents, we, sometimes, watch as our children get into situations

where we know they will be tested, however, we cannot always decide the outcome, we only pray, as Jesus prayed for Peter, that their faith will not fail.

Listen to Peter's reaction to Jesus' statement . . . "*But he replied, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.'*"

Peter's pride and self-sufficiency responded by saying, in essence, "*I am Your most loyal disciple, I really don't need Your prayers.*" Peter assumed he was ready for any trial because he felt strong and spiritually capable to meet whatever might come along.

Back to 1 Corinthians 10 . . .

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"
1 Corinthians 10:12

When the believer "*feels*" strong in himself and is no longer fully dependant upon Christ for his strength . . . he forgets his need of Christ's strength . . . he will stumble!

Jesus knew what lay ahead for Peter, and He continues . . . "*Jesus answered, 'I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me.'*"

Peter sincerely felt he was ready to go to jail or be killed for the Lord, he was eager and anxious to "*prove*" his loyalty, however, **he failed!**

Isn't it true, we often want to go out and do something heroic to further the kingdom of God? We accelerate our "*will-power*" and engage in frantic activities "*for the Lord,*" however, that is not the way God does things.

God does call some believers sometimes to do what appears to be dangerous . . .to risk their lives on a mission field or some other daring act . . .but, not until they have learned "*yielded*" and "*obedience*" in the small things of daily stewardship.

Peter wanted an "*outward*" battle with a recognizable enemy, but Jesus warned him of the battle "*within*" his heart.

Luke 22:56-62 tells of the events that followed Jesus' arrest and early morning trial. A servant girl noticed Peter in the light of the fire, and said . . . "*This man was with Jesus.*" Peter denied it. "*Woman,*" he said, "*I don't even know the man.*" After a while someone else looked at him and said, "*You must be one of them.*" "*No sir, I am not!*" Peter replied. About an hour later someone else flatly stated, "*I know this fellow is one of Jesus' disciples, for both are from Galilee.*" But Peter said, "*Man, I don't know what you are talking about!*" And as he said the words, a rooster crowed. At the moment Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered what He had said, "*Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny Me three times.*" And Peter walked out of the courtyard, crying bitterly.

There was no condemnation, but only compassion and understanding in Jesus' loving eyes. However, Peter saw himself in those eyes, stripped of all pretense, totally unworthy of his Lord's trust. He also realized that Jesus had known all along of his weakness, and had loved him in spite of it.

Peter died a thousand deaths that morning, crying tears of repentance, emptying his spirit of the boasting, brashly, of his own strength. Peter had fallen, **but his faith did not fail!**

Peter may have remember the words from Psalm 37:23-24, which states,

"If the LORD delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with His hand"

Peter had "*a disposition*" to do God's will. He did not perish in the problem (his wilderness). The temptation had been necessary to expose the pride and self-sufficiency that had to go before Peter could become totally dependant upon God.

The "*old*" Peter wanted to rush in and possess the entire Promise-Land at once, however, the "*new*" Peter knew the need for "***steady growth***" in the faith. He had learned how to strengthen and build up the faith of his brothers so that they would not make the same mistakes he had made.

Peter, writing to the converts of the first century some years later, says . . .

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours . . . Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." 2 Peter 1:1,4.

THIS IS THE BELIEVER'S "PROMISE-LAND!"

. . . and Peter tells us how it is to be possessed - "*little by little!*"

Peter tells us in verses 5 through 7, of 2 Peter, of nine Christ-like characteristics which must be cultivated - in order to possess the Promise-Land. The believer will become partakers of the "*divine nature*" of Christ by . . .

1. DILIGENCE

The believer must be persistent, stick to it, work at it. And remember, that it isn't the believer's own work, but rather, persistence is clinging to Christ who works *in* us. Use diligence to exercise *faith*.

2. FAITH

The believer is employ every effort to exercise faith. Settle in his heart the essence of faith as given in Hebrew 11:1, " . . . *faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see, and the conviction of their reality - faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.*" - Amplified

Faith exercised will develop in the believer *virtue*.

3. VIRTUE

Virtue means doing it right. The believer should not take a short cut.. Virtue is excellence, true goodness, uprightness, resolution and Christian energy. The believer is to practice virtue to develop *knowledge*.

4. KNOWLEDGE

The believer leans to know God better and discover what He want him to do. He is to seek out God's will for him, which comes from a study of the Bible. The believer is not to spend his life being spoon-fed by others, but, rather, learns how to study God's Word - [with a good Bible dictionary and concordance] - He must grow up in his personal knowledge of God, His ways and His Word. In practicing what the believer knows about God's ways and wants for him, he develops *self-control*.

5. SELF-CONTROL

What causes one to lose control? The answer is, it is one's stubborn self-will. The believer gets angry when *his will* is opposed, *his* comfort disturbed, *his* opinion questioned. The problem is always the believer's giant-sized ego. How can he practice self-control? Certainly, not by gritting his teeth and saying, "*I won't get angry any more!*" His self will be controlled when he puts aside his own desires, dies to his ego, and let Jesus control him. When the believer's self is controlled by Christ, he will learn the real meaning of the word, "*self-control*." When this happens, he will develop *patience*.

6. PATIENCE

Patience is steadfast endurance in all circumstances and only develops as it is practiced. Practicing steadfast patience leads to *godliness*.

7. GODLINESS

This word, "*godliness*," is a word with many implications. An important one is impartiality or justice. God is totally just and impartial. The believer can measure his godliness by the way he treats his enemies. Does he love them like he does his friends? If he were God and had some rain to give, on whom would he send it? Would he send rain on the just and the unjust? The ability to be impartial is a mark of godliness. As the believer practices godliness, he develops *brother affection*.

8. BROTHERLY AFFECTION

The believer is to put aside the old reactions to people he dislikes. He is yield himself to Christ. He is to let Christ's affection, who loves all men as brothers, flow through him. Practicing brotherly affection will develop *Christian love*.

9. CHRISTIAN LOVE

Christian love is the final step on the believer's ladder of preparation to possess the Promise-Land. Christian love is "*agape-love*," the highest form of love - a reasoning, intentional, deliberate, spiritual devotion for others. This is not an emotional feeling - variable as the wind - but a steady, unchanging affection.

The natural love, which most humans are capable of, is always directed toward something or someone they like, are attracted too, and approve of. "*Agape-love*" is the nature of God's love. God loves us when we are ugly, wrong and rebellious.

Admittedly, it is impossible for the believer to love like that *unless* Christ lives and loves in him. With Christ's love within him, the believer can **will** to love as God directs him, regardless of his feelings.

When the believer finds himself confronted with someone he doesn't *feel* loving towards, he can confess his lack of love, resist his human feelings, yield himself to Christ, and ask that He make him able to love.

Agape-love makes it possible to experience unending love in marriage. No marriage need ever die for lack of love. If love appears to have cooled, the answer is confession, repentance, and a willingness to stand on God's principle. The problem may be rough, but God's provision is secured by Christ.

Jesus commanded the believer to love - even his enemies. He would not have done so if the provision was not already available.

These nine principles are linked together progressively, and the believer needs them to possess the Promise-Land.

Peter concludes his thoughts with the following encouragements and promises . . .

"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:8-11

When the believer possess the Promise-Land, he will be fruitful and useful to the Lord, and will live a strong, good life.

Christ desires for believers to strive for these "nine additions" to their faith in Christ. If they do not "possess their Promise-Land," they are short-sighted, wandering in the wilderness.

God's intention is to bring all believers into the Promise-Land. Anyone who does not accept this opportunity is very foolish!

Peter says, "*So, dear brothers, work hard to prove that you are really among those God has called and chosen, and then you will **never stumble or fall away!***" 2 Peter 1:10

The word here for "never" has the meaning, "*positively, absolutely, guaranteed never!*"

Peter knew what it meant to fall, and he had learned what it takes to keep from falling.

When the believer allows Christ to develop these nine principles in his life, he will never, never, ever fall!

Temptations will come! However, if there is nothing in the believer's heart that will cause him to stumble, the temptation is only to sift him and prepare him to possess the Promise-Land.

"And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

2 Peter 1:11

The Kingdom of God belongs here and now . . .

- and waits for the believer to enter and possess it - *little by little!*