

An Old Testament Allegory of the Christian Life

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I Corinthians 10:1-13

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The focus this morning is on verses 6 and 11. Paul says the things that happened to old Israel happened for our example because we are not to lust over evil things as they lusted.

I begin by asking you this question: **Are you tired of the spiritual rut you have entered into?**

It is said that a rut is a grave with both ends kicked out. So often we find ourselves spiritually wandering in circles and we get tired. Are you at a place spiritually where you feel like you're not progressing? Well, today this message is for you.

The Apostle Paul said this was the predicament in which Israel found themselves and he sites three special events in the nation of Israel: the exodus, the wilderness wanderings and entering the promise land. These are the three events we are going to focus on this morning because they are for us. As he said to the Corinthians, those things happened not just for them but for us also. What is it the Apostle Paul would have us to see in these three events?

Some say the writer of Hebrews is the Apostle Paul and, some say it's not; it's interesting that the writer—whoever he might be—suggests these three events have a special lesson for New

Covenant believers also. For example, in Hebrews 3:7-12, the writer to this church—which was basically Jewish—warns them to learn from the lessons of old Israel.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. (Hebrews 3:7-12)

The lesson the writer of Hebrews wants us to see is that there is a potential even for Christians in departing from the living God. He goes on to say in the same third chapter:

For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:16-19)

Here is the analogy, the lesson from the Old Testament people of Israel in the wilderness:

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (Hebrews 4:1)

The lesson is this—the people of Israel who wandered around for 40 years in the wilderness died and weren’t able to enter into the Promised Land, which symbolized the rest of God. The reason was unbelief. For New Covenant believers Christ is their Sabbath, He is their rest. The writer wanted his audience to see what happened to Israel so they would be afraid and continue to believe and experience the rest of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews says there is a rest for us today. What is that rest? It’s not heaven. He’ll refer to that in the eleventh verse of the fourth chapter but right here he is saying that for all who have been saved, God wants to not only deliver you from your sins but for you to experience rest that is in Jesus Christ.

Paul and the writer of Hebrews are both citing three events in the history of Israel: the exodus, the wilderness wanderings and the entrance into the Promised Land and they both say these events are hugely significant for you. How so?

I. THE EXODUS

How does the exodus have any lesson for us today? How does something that happened to Old Covenant Israel have any application to us? Some would argue and say there is no application whatsoever because Old Covenant Israel was basically an unregenerate people. By and

large many were not true believers. They had the name of God, they professed to believe in God but in the end—as we see in Hebrews 3—they perished. Why? Unbelief. They weren't true believers of God so there is no application for us, they say. Others say there is application because in the Old Testament the people of Israel are the church of God. I think that's stretching it a bit because of the very argument of regeneration. They were basically unregenerate while in the New Testament all of God's people are regenerate. Every member of the church of Jesus Christ is regenerated.

This is where the reformers seriously missed it. Luther, Calvin and these men missed it because they defined the New Testament church as a mixed congregation, meaning some are saved and some aren't. They got that from Old Testament Israel.

Jesus said, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." The Bible says God knows who are His and their names are engraved on His heart. The church of Jesus Christ are a blood-bought people whom He is sanctifying through the Word of Truth, washing and perfecting until they will one day stand in His presence without spot, wrinkle or blemish. All of God's people are regenerate in the New Testament church. So how can we look at these events and see anything for us today? Because the New Testament does. Even though, by and large, Israel was unregenerate, meaning most of them were not true believers in God and died in their sin, there is still a lesson for us.

Can we not say that the exodus represents deliverance from sin? Here were a people under bondage and a deliverer was sent to them.

A. A Deliverer is Sent.

We would all agree, if we've studied our Bible for any length of time, that Moses was a type of Christ. In fact, Moses said there would come a prophet like unto him and the people should listen to Him. Who was he referring to? Jesus. Moses was a type and shadow of Him as a man who delivered them out of the bondage of slavery. We have a deliverer whose very name means "the God who saves." God, in Christ, has delivered us from the bondage of our sins. We've been set free. How did He do that? The same way He delivered the people from Egypt, by destroying any confidence in the gods of their bondage.

B. The Gods of The Peoples' Bondage Destroyed.

Ten plagues happened and each plague was aimed at a particular deity of Egypt. The power of God demonstrated through those plagues that each deity holding the people of Israel in bondage were false gods. They were idols with no power behind them. This is exactly what God does in a man or a woman who is yet to be saved.

When He begins to convince them of their sins, what does He do? He begins to destroy their hopes and confidences, the idols of their own hearts and shows there is no sufficiency there.

He proves the idols don't carry the value they once believed they had and shows His power in His deliverer.

C. Passover Lamb is Slain.

Once again we see a picture of Jesus Christ, do we not? I Corinthians 5:17 says,

"For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

So the Lamb of God was slain and by whose blood we are spared God's wrath so that His wrath passes over us. The parallel is easy to see there.

D. The Baptism of the Red Sea.

As they were baptized in Moses, we have been immersed in Jesus Christ. We are in Christ. We are literally submerged into His life and He is in us.

The parallels of exodus to the Christian life are not hard to understand. It's the second one, however, that will take a little bit more time to explain.

II. The Wilderness Temptation

Just because Israel had been delivered from Egypt didn't mean Egypt wasn't still with them. They were no longer in Egypt but Egypt was still in them. For 400 years these people had been slaves—it's all they had known. You don't just stop being a slave. So God leads them into the wilderness in order to set them free from the mindset of their past life in Egypt.

A. God Lead Them Into the Wilderness.

This is the same for the newborn Christian. You've been saved, you've been set free from the guilt of your sin and its ruling domination, but that doesn't mean you're free from sin altogether. Unfortunately, after we've been saved we discovered we still have a sin problem. I still am tempted and enticed by sin. So, it is one thing to be set free from the domination of the enslavement of sin, to come out from under its rule and the mastery of Satan, the prince of darkness, but it's another thing to be free from the way I thought and conducted myself in my slavery to sin.

This is so evident every time I go to Romania. It seems like there is always somebody who wants to remind me that part of their difficulty today in the Christian realm is because of being under communism for so long. In fact, someone suggested it again when we were there a few weeks ago. They said, "We believe that part of our problem is because we spent all of our lives under communism where a distrust was developed. We couldn't even trust our best friend because we didn't know whether he or she might be an informant for the government. So you

never opened up and trusted people, and it's still with us today.”

They had been slaves and all they knew was a master. They could never do anything they wanted to do, they were subjected to the domination of another people and therefore that old mindset was still in them, even after they had been freed. They thought like a slave and wanted to continue to live like a slave because they didn't know any other way.

When the Israelites had difficulties in the wilderness, what was the first thing they wanted to do? Go back and be a slave in Egypt again. “At least we had something to eat there,” was their argument. If you're a Christian today, God released you from the power of sin's domination. You don't have to sin anymore. You don't have to do what the devil tells you. You're not subject to him or the ruling power of sin, but there is still something about you that thinks according to your old life. You still find yourself thinking the same way and at times even saying the same things and acting in some of the same ways, having the same dispositions and inclinations. You've been brought out of the kingdom of darkness, but there is remnants of that darkness within and it crops up at times.

So what does God do? He leads you into the wilderness as He led the Israelites into the wilderness. Why would God lead them and us into a place of dryness, barrenness and difficulty? Two reasons:

I. To Protect Them From Immediate Battle With the Enemy.

Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, “Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.” (Exodus 13:17)

The shortest route between Egypt and Israel, the Promised Land, was right through the land of the Philistines and it was about a two-week trip. Not 40 years—two weeks. But God said “If I take them the shortest route there will be a battle and conflict and they're not ready for that.” Beloved, I have seen this countless times. A person is saved, forgiven of their sins, and brought into the family of God and God in His mercies, as a tender Father, puts a hedge of protection around them. Why? For the same reason. He doesn't allow Satan to get to them because they're not ready to do battle with the enemy. They don't know how to do it. Here is Israel, their hands weren't used to the handle of a sword but to a shovel, they were not trained in warfare, therefore the first time a battle arose they would run willing and ready to go back into slavery instead of facing warfare.

The baby Christian is just like that. They're immature having no knowledge of spiritual warfare, having their hands not suited to the sword of the Spirit yet. So God puts a shield of protection around them and buffers them in the first days and weeks. There are exceptions to this, there are some skirmishes, but not beyond what that new baby can handle. There is a time of protection. But eventually they must be prepared to do battle. This is what the wilderness was for.

I thank God for those seasons of protection after I was saved. It was like I walked in a perpetual land of candy and chocolates where there were sweets all around. That's the only way I know how to describe the weeks after my conversion—it was just awesomely good. The blessing of God's presence, the joy that comes from the knowledge that my sins are forgiven, to be able to call on His name and feel like I'm right there in His presence and He's right there before me were so awesome. And then there were the answers to prayer.

I've said before if you want your prayers answered go ask a baby Christian to pray. It's as if every one of their prayers get answered. Why? God is developing them. They're babies and you've got to do it all for them. I'm learning again just how much you've got to do for a baby with our new grandson. You've got to feed them, diaper them, hold them, burp them and lie them down; I mean they can't do one thing for themselves. Nor can the new Christian. That's why a new Christian needs to be disciplined in the family of God. When God starts saving people around here we're going to need you to take people under your wing and teach them to do battle with the enemy because the day is coming when the hedge of protection will be lifted and God's shield will be removed so that Christian must take up the shield of faith.

So the first reason God led them into the wilderness was to protect them from this.

2. To Test Them.

There are three reasons the Lord had to test them.

a. The Lord tested them to expose their hearts to themselves.

And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

Did God not know whether Israel would keep His commandments or not? Of course He did. Did Israel know whether they would keep His commandments or not? No. The test was for them, to expose their own hearts to themselves and to therefore reduce their pride and confidence in themselves.

Beloved, sooner or later after you've been saved, God will take you to a place of deprivation, a wilderness—spiritually speaking—where it seems as if the very presence of God cannot be found and you feel all alone. Once it seemed as if God was answering all your prayers, but now it's as if He doesn't even hear them. There is a place where you're going to be tested. All of you who have been saved any length of time you know I'm speaking the truth. You're going to be led into a wilderness where there is no evidence of God's care or provision, no water, no food, it's hot, dusty and dry and you're tired and weak. Why? To prove to you that the Christian life cannot be lived by our own wits or will. The wilderness is to humble us and to show we desperately need Him.

He led them in the wilderness so they could be tried and tested, knowing they would fail. That was all God intended. God wanted their failures to prove to them that they were not as mighty as they thought they were. It's the same syndrome we shared with you last Sunday night—the Peter syndrome.

“Oh, if everybody forsakes You, I will not forsake You, Lord,” Peter said. And within hours, what had he done? Forsaken the Lord. Peter didn't know what was in his own heart, did he? But that night proved what was in his heart and he never forgot. That's why God leads us to the wilderness. That's why His presence seems to have evaporated and you feel as if you're all alone. God is leading you into this place in order to test you and expose your heart to yourself.

b. To learn to live by the supernatural and the spiritual.

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

This was written after nearly forty years in the wilderness and Israel was preparing to go into the Promised Land. Moses is about to die and give the baton to Joshua and this is Moses's last sermon. His testimony was that God led them into the wilderness not only to expose their pride and show them what was really in them but also to teach them to live in the supernatural realm by the Word of God alone. Do not think that God will not do that to you if you're His child. The fact that you are His child is the guarantee that you're going to have to spend some time in the wilderness because it's in the wilderness you learn that you can't live by your word, your wits, your way; you've got to live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

God was teaching them to live according to the will of God, which means you live according to the supernatural power of God.

Dear brother, the Christian life is wrongly assumed to be much like our natural lives. That's our first mistake—thinking that. With our children we train them to be independent of us and to live on their own, and we think that's what spiritual maturity is like. We believe one day we ought to be independent, full grown and strong, doing great things for God. That is not spiritual maturity. That's not the way the Christian life develops. The Christian life develops as John the Baptist pronounced it: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” He must be strong, I must be weak. He must lead, I must follow.

God wants to lead all of us into a place where we learn we are insufficient to live the Christian life. Unless we learn to transition from the natural to the spiritual we are going to continually fail God and ourselves.

c. To be set free from self-will.

This is huge. Just because you're saved doesn't mean you don't have the ability to choose differently from what God wants to choose for you. When you were a slave to sin you didn't have the desire to choose righteousness. All your choices were really one thing—whatever you wanted. You couldn't have chosen to be righteous because you didn't want to be righteous. That's the problem. You can only choose what you want. But now that you've been saved and set free you have the ability to say yes or no to God.

The true moral agent is the Christian not the sinner. We've been set free to make choices and now that we're saved we have to realize we can choose to disobey God. How often do we disobey God thinking we are obeying God by doing what we think is best? I've got to learn that doing what I think is best is the natural realm not the spiritual. So what must God do to help me? Break me of self-will.

You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. (Deuteronomy 8:5-6)

So God takes you to the wilderness until you're broken. What does it look like to be broken? It means you have a willingness to do whatever God wants because you've learned God always does what is best. God uses the wilderness to teach us how to live in the victory of Christ.

B. This is God's Way With All His Children.

I'm convinced this is the way of all God's children and I can prove it. Matthew 4:1:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

If God the Father would send His own Son into the wilderness to be tested He will lead you to be tested. You will not escape this.

Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, one day for every year Israel was in the wilderness. But in Jesus' case, He passed the test. His heart was exposed and found blameless. When Satan tempted Him after 40 days of fasting about His hunger do you know what Jesus said? He quoted the verse we read earlier.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

He passed the test. He was living in the spiritual realm and knew that what God required of Him was all He needed.

We've compartmentalized spirituality to only deal with what we think are the most important things of life. In the test of Jesus the first temptation was the test of eating. Whether He would eat or not, what He would eat, and how. That was the test and Jesus said, "Even though I'm hun-

gry, I'm not going to do what I think I should do. I'm not going to satisfy my appetite the way I think I should or by your suggestion, Satan. I'm not going to eat one crumb until My Father says it's time."

That's how committed to the Father our Lord was. And beloved that's how our Father wants us to be as His children.

C. God Will First Crush a Man Before He Builds a Man.

What God has to do is crush a man or woman before He builds a man or a woman. For three and a half years, the disciples were under the ministry and teaching of Jesus. Let me tell you something about the teaching of Christ—it was not so academic as it was breaking those three men. Humbling those three men to understand they were not going to get anything from God except by faith. So He has to take Peter and put him through the test of publically professing or denying Him. He has to take the other disciples through the test of standing with Him or forsaking Him in His hour of need. And He leads them through one test after another so that these men are absolutely broken and know there is no way they can live a spiritual life—they've got to depend upon every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

I said this second event in the life of Israel is more difficult to explain and I have to confess to you that for years it has been a mystery to me. I've said, if I could ever figure out what's going on in this wilderness illustration I think I could understand the Christian life much better and for years and years I've been searching that answer, dancing around it, getting pretty close to it but not until recent months has the Lord finally helped me to understand.

My problem was that I so believed in the promise of the New Covenant that it was hard for me to understand how God could allow believers to be in the wilderness for a long time. Israel was there 40 years and we know they were mostly unregenerate so there the analogy breaks down, but what about verses in the New Testament that talks about how God develops the believer? And what about the promise of the New Covenant: "I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols . . . I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25, 27).

Many verses in the New Testament promise our growth and maturity in the Christian faith. For example, I Thessalonians 5:23-24,

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Jesus promised to mature and sanctify us, to make us holy in spirit, soul and body. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," says Jude.

With all of these promises it's hard for me to understand how it's possible for a Christian to be saved and then go to the wilderness and seem to stay there, and God not teach them to live the Spirit-led life.

However, there are other verse like 1 Corinthians 3:1-3,

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

In the book of Galatians, some of Paul's converts fall into heresy and Paul's response was, "I don't even know if you're even saved. I'm going to have to pray that Christ be formed in you."

When you read Ephesians and Colossians, Paul warns them they can't keep living like the old persons they once were because they're not that old person anymore.

In Hebrews 5 and you read almost identical to what we read in 1 Corinthians 3,

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

The author says, "We've got to stop this elementary stuff and go on, but I can't go on with you because you're too natural in your thinking."

Then you turn to James 4:1,

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:1-4)

You get into the book of Revelation and you see that the Ephesian church has left its first love and almost all of the seven churches of the Apocalypse have problems in their church. The Laodicean church was the worse and Jesus says,

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because

you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. (Revelation 3:15-17)

I read these verses and the verses where God promises to grow us and I think How can the two be so? How can God make Christians to grow and at the same time give examples of New Testament churches and Christians not growing or progressing, even warning that He's going to vomit them out of His mouth? How can the two be compatible? The answer is in the illustration of the wilderness.

How long did God intend for Israel to remain in the wilderness? That's an important question to help us understand this. The Lord intended Israel to be in the wilderness for about a year. He got them out of Egypt and the first place He directed them to was Sinai. At Mount Sinai God gave them the law and for the next year Moses taught it, making it understandable to them. At the end of that year God said they were now ready to go into the Promised Land. He led them by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and they got to the edge of the Promise Land and God told them to send 12 spies into the land. Forty days they were in the land spying the land and you know the rest of the story. Ten came back with an evil report and convinced the whole congregation that they could not occupy the land. In other words, they told the people we can't trust God to keep His word to us.

The result was God judged them. The judgment was for every day that the spies were in the land; Israel would be one year in the wilderness. So for 39 more years they went in circles over and over. The same lessons, the same places, learning things over and over again until that generation was gone and God had completely humbled Israel.

Please hear me. I don't believe God intends any of His children to be in the wilderness very long. He didn't intend Israel to be there long, just enough to teach them His Word so He could get Egypt out of their hearts. God doesn't have to take a Christian into the wilderness in order for them to learn to deny themselves and no longer live by their will. It doesn't have to take long to learn that. But here's the problem. God will let you stay in the wilderness because of your self-will, which says to God "I don't want to learn that lesson." You will continue to go around and around and feel like you never make any progress. You feel like you're in the same place you've been for years. I know this makes sense because many of us have lived this.

We think we have learned our lesson and what happens? God tests us and we flunk the test and we have to take it all over again. We have to go back around in a circle, going the same way we've been before and once again the test comes and what happens? We fail again.

He will let you continue to stay in your immaturity if that's what you want because to force maturity on you is not love. God wants you to want to grow in Him. He wants you to want His will in your life not because you have to but because you want to.

There are two warnings I want to conclude with.

1. The longer you are in the wilderness being tested and not progressing you must wonder if you've truly been saved.

That's the first lesson we have to learn. Hebrews chapter three, we read it at the very beginning. That was the warning. Listen to it again.

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it."

In other words, that church had not progressed. They stayed on milk, they did not mature, they stayed babes; they continued to act like natural men and women. The warning to the Hebrew church was, they should be afraid of missing the rest that is in Christ.

If you are remaining year after year in the wilderness, you're giving proof you may not be a Christian. If I'm not growing in my faith and progressing in wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ and still thinking with this natural mind, staying that way year after year I must ask myself, for the love of my own soul, am I really His?

The second warning is:

2. If you are a Christian, God is not going to let you stay in that wilderness.

You can stay there as long as you want but there will come a crisis and it will force you to look to Him. I've seen this time and again. Notice what He says in Deuteronomy 8:5,

"You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you."

That's exactly what Hebrews 12 says. God chastens those who are His children.

Here is the sad thing. There are many Christians who will never enter the Promised Land until the end of their lives. I'm not talking about heaven.

What is the Promised Land? It's resting in Jesus Christ receiving all the blessings He is by faith.

You believe that whatever is true about Him is true about you. By doing so you are able to live a spiritual life. You're able to occupy this body and walk a holy, sanctified life. You're able to have control over this natural body and not live by your own wits, will and way but by the Holy Spirit filling you.

That is the Promised Land.

There are some Christians who will not enter the Promised Land until a crisis comes and God finally breaks your heart and exposes it as self-willed.

I've seen God take people's health away from them. I've seen Him take them through serious financial problems or even the disintegration of their families. They no longer have their health, or resources, or relationships they once had. All they have is Jesus Christ and all that He is, and in that crisis God breaks them and exposes their heart so they finally say, *"Yes, I've been living according to my own wits, will and way. But God, for whatever days I have left, even if it's just the next hour, I'm going to live for You."*

God does that for every Christian. Don't wait until your life is almost over. Don't wait.

This message is an introduction into a series of messages we're about to start about the union with Jesus Christ. I'm telling you, the Promised Land is wonderful. God wants to feed you, sustain you, equip you, strengthen you and bless you to the point where you are walking in Him and He in you and you enjoy rest.

I can prove to you whether you're in the Promised Land or not by this one question: **Is your spiritual experience one of aggravation, work, effort and constant weariness or is your Christian experience one of rest, joy, peace, strength and hope?** See the difference? You don't have to be in the wilderness any longer than you choose to be.

What does it take to get out of the wilderness? Die to your self-will once and for all and then moment by moment after that.

If you're not willing to do that this morning and you're really God's child there is coming a day when a crisis will arise that will finally break your stubborn self-will.

Our church will not desert you in that day but don't let it come to that! Get out of the wilderness today. He didn't intend for you to stay there very long, just to learn you can't live by anything except the words that proceed out of His mouth. And if you follow Him you will occupy the land of His blessings.

I'm not promising you that the Promised Land is going to be easy. Israel had to go and fight, that's why the Promised Land doesn't represent heaven. It's not good imagery if I have to go fight demons when I get to heaven. No, the Promise Land represents living in the rest of God, Jesus Christ our Sabbath, and realizing everything that's true about Him is true about you. May God help you to believe it. Amen.