

**Between the Promise and the Promised Land**  
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What started as a stand-alone sermon has turned into a series called The Purpose of Temptation. It started with a message I preached entitled A Way of Escape. It was based on 1 Corinthians 10:13 which says:

*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.*

There are several truths we learned about temptation from this sermon.

- Temptation is not sin.
- Temptation is common to us all
- We saw that there are only 3 types of temptation.
- Every single temptation that any has ever faced or will ever face is in one of these 3 categories.
- We saw that God never tempts us to sin.
- We saw that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear.
- God always provides a way of escape.

But we also saw that the way of escape is not always an escape *from* temptation! The text says: *with the temptation God will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.* To bear it means you will be able to endure the temptation.

- There is no temptation beyond what you are able to resist – with God’s help.

Last week I preached a follow up message called The Purpose Of Temptation. We saw that:

- Temptation shows you what’s in your heart
- Temptation keeps you humble and dependent on God
- Temptation proves the reality of your faith and commitment to God
- Temptation proves the depth of your love for God
- Temptation teaches you to rely on the word of God
- Resisting temptation builds your strength to resist temptation!
- And most importantly – temptation is part of the process of maturing you and making you like Christ!

This week I felt led to preach a sermon called Between the Promise and the Promised Land. Think about everything that happened to the Children of Israel between the time God promised them a land to call their own and the time they actually occupied that Promised Land.

In between the Promise and the Promised Land were things like:

The Egyptian army

The Red Sea

The Wilderness

Hunger and thirst

Temptations, Tests, and Problems

Years of waiting and wandering

Many enemies who did not want to give up the land

But also in between the Promise and the Promised Land were things like:

God parting the Red Sea

God defeating the Egyptian army and other enemies

God miraculously providing food and water

So – when Israel obeyed God, worshipped God and followed God, they were blessed. But when they gave in to temptation they forfeited the blessing and many died in the wilderness. They never even made it into the Promised Land because they were overcome by the things that were in between the Promise and the Promised Land.

And in our lives - between the Promise and the Promised Land – between the dream and its fulfillment – between the vision and the reality – there are times of temptation and testing, enemies to overcome and problems to solve.

How we respond to these temptations and problems determines whether or not we receive the fulfillment of the promise!

What we sometimes fail to understand is that the promises of God are usually conditional. For instance – God promised the Children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6:3

*All will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.*

Those are awesome promises! All will go well with you – you will have many children – and you will live in a land flowing with milk and honey. But here's what the verses before that say:

*These are the commands, decrees, and regulations that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you. You must obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy, and you and your children and grandchildren must fear the Lord your God as long as you live. If you obey all His decrees and commands, you will enjoy a long life. Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.*

So, God promised to give them long life and increase in a land flowing with milk

and honey – IF they kept His commandments. The word “if” is a conditional clause. It is a conjunction used to indicate the circumstances that would have to exist in order for an event to happen. So...

### **1- Between a promise and the promised land are conditions.**

Most of God’s promises are conditional. That means God says, “I will do this *if* you will do that.” He always gives us a choice to go His way or our way. That’s when the temptation comes in to try to tempt us to go our own way rather than God’s. That’s Satan trying to keep us out of our Promised Land.

There are many conditional promises in the Bible. For example – there are conditions to our prayers being answered. Matthew 7:7 says:

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

So we see a promise: It will be given you. But there’s a condition: If you ask Don’t expect God to just see your need and automatically meet it! You must ask for it! In fact, James 4:2-3 says:

*You do not have what you want because you do not ask God. And even when you ask, you do not receive because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.*

We see here 2 conditions to answered prayer – ask and ask with right motives. If your prayers are selfish, you will not get what you ask for.

In Matthew 21:22, Jesus gives another condition for answered prayer:

*If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.*

So – faith is a condition to answered prayer. In fact, James 1:7 says:

*If you don't ask with faith, don't expect the Lord to give you an answer.*

1 John 3:22 gives another condition for answered prayer.

*Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we obey His commandments and do those things that please Him.*

So – obedience is another condition for answered prayer. Are you getting this?

I can go on all day showing you conditional promises in the Bible. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says:

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and*

*seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

God promises to heal our land if we meet His conditions of humbling ourselves, praying, seeking God's face and turning from wicked ways. Romans 10:9 says:

*If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

We are not saved by good works, but we saved by faith and confessing Jesus as Lord. Those are God's conditions. No one will be saved without faith and confession. 1 John 1:9 says:

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

So we have the promise of forgiveness if we meet the condition of confessing our sins. But confession is not the only condition. For instance, in Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus said:

*If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

So, God's forgiveness is a promise, but it has conditions! We must confess our sins and we must forgive others.

We all want to live long lives and we want things to go well in life. God promises to give that to us, but there are conditions! Here's one. Ephesians 6:2-3 says:

*"Honor your father and mother" — which is the first commandment with a promise — "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

Many times - when things are not going well for us in life - it can be traced back to a violation of this conditional promise.

I could spend days going over these conditional promises. But I hope you're getting it, because in these days where people are teaching hyper-grace – grace out of balance – there is a tendency for people to believe they will get blessings from God no matter what they believe or how they act. That is a lie from the devil! That is the tempter tempting you to go your own way rather than God's!

God's way is this: between the promise and the promised land, there are conditions. Sometimes people will say, "I prayed and nothing happened." At those times we need to check the Word and see if we have met God's conditions.

By the way – many times people intentionally don't meet the conditions. They expect a harvest without planting seed.

They expect financial blessing without giving tithes and offerings.  
 They expect to have good kids without having to discipline them.  
 They expect to have a dream marriage without dying to self.  
 They expect to have a dream job without having to submit to their boss.  
 They expect to have their dreams in life fulfilled without working for it.

But between your dream and your destiny are conditions!  
 Between your promise and your Promised Land are conditions.

## **2 – Between a promise and the Promised Land, there are problems!**

Bob Mumford wrote a book back in the 70's called The Purpose of Temptation. In it, he taught what he called The Law of the Four P's. Here it is:

God gives a Promise, that is linked to a Principle (condition) followed by a Problem (wilderness temptation) that leads to a Provision (promised land).

We will stay stuck in the wilderness if we don't understand this pattern. We will die in the wilderness if we are like the Children of Israel, wanting the Promised Land without meeting the conditions. We will stay stuck in life if we don't understand the purpose of problems! I preached on that last week. We must realize that problems don't come to replace the provision; problems come as a part of the process of receiving the provision!

We need the problem to prepare us for the promised land! The Children of Israel died in the wilderness because they could never accept the problem as part of God's plan!

Between a promised and the promised land there is a wilderness of problems! That's true in every area of your life, in your marriage, in your career, in your health, in your finances. And if we don't understand this, we will keep taking laps around the wilderness until we do!

Listen – God can change our circumstances immediately if He wants to. So when He doesn't, could it be that He wants to change something in us? What if the circumstances are there to bring about the changes in us! And if we fix the fix that God fixes to fix us, then He will fix another fix to fix us!

What happens is this: if we don't learn what God wants us to learn through the problems we face, He will be patient with us. He will allow us another lap around the wilderness. But each lap will gradually get harder and harder until we learn the principle, overcome the problem and enter the Promised Land! Or – we die in the wilderness.

I can give you examples of people all through the Bible who had to go through this process before they received their promise. Adam and Eve were promised personal fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden. The condition was that they must obey

God's commands. The problem was there was a tree in the garden that God said not to eat from, but Satan tempted them to eat anyway. The result was they failed to follow God and sin and death entered the world and they were kicked out of the garden and lost fellowship with God.

Moses was promised to be the deliverer of Israel. The condition was that he would only do and say what God commanded. At first Moses failed the test by taking things into his own hands and killing an Egyptian. He spent years in exile in the wilderness until God saw that he was ready to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land.

David was promised and anointed to be king of Israel. The condition was obedience to the will and timing of God. The big problem was that there was already a king named Saul who tried to kill David many times. But David passed the test and was eventually crowned king of Israel.

Joseph had a vision and promise from God that he would be a ruler. The condition was faith and trusting God with the timing and the process. It did not happen like Joseph thought it would because of a huge problem. His brothers threw him into a pit and then sold him into slavery. While a slave, he was falsely accused and thrown into prison. He waited for years, but during those years God was at work. Ps 105:19 in the New Living Translation says:

*Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the word of the Lord kept trying and testing him.*

Joseph did in fact have a word from God – a promise from God. But big problems came between the promise and its fulfillment. And in all those years of problems – the prophetic word that Joseph received rang in his ears! He was tempted to doubt it.

That's what Satan does whenever we get a word from God. He comes to us just like he did to Adam and Eve and says, "Hath God really said? Is that word really true? Is any of God's word even true?" That will test you and try you. And the goal will be to get you to give up. To get you to go your own way rather than God's way.

So – when you get a word from God, a prophecy, a dream or a vision – Satan will immediately try to steal it from you. That's because he wants to keep you out of your Promised Land. That's why Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:18-19

*I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies previously made about you, so that by them you may strongly engage in battle, having faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and have suffered the shipwreck of their faith.*

Paul is saying there's a problem between your promise and your promised land! There's an enemy who wants to keep you out.

So you must strongly engage in spiritual warfare!  
 You must stay in faith and keep a good conscience.  
 If you don't – you are in danger or shipwrecking your faith!

I can tell you as someone who's been in church my whole life – I've seen many people turn from God when their promise did not immediately come true. I've seen their bones scattered in the wilderness, so to speak!

But we must be like Joseph! Joseph passed the test – he stayed in faith - and in one day he was raised up into his promised land!  
 In one day he went from the prison to the palace!  
 Now – years and years of problems came before that one day!  
 There are many other examples of this truth in the Bible!  
 They are written down for us to learn from!

Deb and I have seen this truth in our lives! We had a word from God that we would get a new house, but it didn't just happen! There were years of praying, waiting, searching, working and saving before the day came when we possessed the promised house!

We had a word from God that we would pastor a church, but it didn't just happen. There were years of praying, waiting, getting counsel, planning, working and much spiritual warfare. But the day came when we planted the promised church.

Between our promise and our promised land, there were conditions from God we had to meet and demons from hell we had to defeat!

I'm trying to help you today! When we get a promise from God – it helps us to know there are conditions from God and problems from Satan between the promise and the Promised Land!

Our job is to submit to God and resist Satan!  
 Love God and hate evil!  
 Follow God's way and not our own way!  
 Lean on God and not our own understanding!  
 Believe the word of God and reject the lies of Satan.  
 Obey the commands of God and disobey every direction from the devil.  
 Put on the armor of God and overcome every attack of the enemy!  
 Put on the garment of praise and take off the spirit of heaviness.  
 Praise God for His promise!  
 Praise God for His word that shows you how to possess the promise.  
 Praise God for the authority of His name to defeat the enemy!  
 Praise God for the patience to wait on His timing!  
 Praise God for the faith and character He's building in you through this process so that you may inherit His promise, in Jesus' name!