The Premise
The Scripture indicates that whenever God blesses us with a promise, He often rolls death (terminal circumstances) into that promise in order to make the fulfillment of the promise an absolute impossibility. In actuality, He is simply arranging circumstances in such a way that we must acknowledge that promise was fulfilled only by His power, not by our own resources. At this point we must not lose heart, but we must walk in faith in order for resurrection life to reanimate the promise. God specifically appoints a moment of response, a window of opportunity, that sets the miracle in motion. It is during that moment that we must respond to God in faithful obedience. Only the time divinely chosen is acceptable to The Lord.

Part Two: Seizing the Moment of Opportunity

Numbers 14:10-45 ESV  
Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O L ORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O L ORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of your fame will say, It is because the L ORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness. And now, please let the power of the L ORD be great as you have promised, saying, ’The L ORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” Then the L ORD said, “I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the L ORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it. Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.” And the L ORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, “How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the L ORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of
your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure. 35 I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die. 36 And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land— the men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the LORD. 37 Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive. 38 When Moses told these words to all the people of Israel, the people mourned greatly. 39 And they rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, “Here we are. We will go up to the place that the LORD has promised, for we have sinned.” 40 But Moses said, “Why now are you transgressing the command of the LORD, when that will not succeed? 41 Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies. 42 For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.” 43 But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed out of the camp. 44 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah.

“There is a window of faith, a moment of opportunity, that God will open when important challenges lie before us. It is critical that we seize that moment – to go through the open door, the raised window, or opportunity may be lost for that season.” - David Wilkerson

“Father, I know you love this man. There are several lessons you brought him to this conference to learn. The one he brings to the altar today may be the toughest. Teach him now, (he prayed for three specifics), and help him to understand that if he fails to learn it now, a new crisis will bring him to this point, if he fails then, another crisis –again and again, until he does learn it. I thank you for your commitment to the process. And I thank you for your love that never gives up on us. In Jesus’ Name I pray – Amen.” – Dudley Hall, January 1988

1. Learn from Israel at their door of opportunity (Numbers 14). This is their moment! (vv. 5-19)

- According to Deuteronomy 19, the idea of the spies originated with the doubtful Israelites, not with Jehovah or with Moses. Up until this time, they had been led by the Pillar and the Cloud. Now, at the greatest opportunity of their lives, they decide to trust their own wisdom instead of God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25).

- This was never God’s plan. He knew what was in the hearts of the people. Ten of the twelve spies come back with an evil report. Yes it is a good land. It’s everything God said it was, but we are too weak to take it.

  - Numbers 14:1-9 NIV That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is
the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?”

4 And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. 6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

2. Suddenly the window is closed; the moment of opportunity is lost (vv. 10-39)

10 But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. 11 The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.” 13 Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them.

14 And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, LORD, are with these people and that you, LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. 15 If you put all these people to death, leaving none alive, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 16 The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath, so he slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ 17 Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 18 The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.’ 19 In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.” 20 The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. 21 Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— 22 not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. 23 But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. 24 Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.”

25 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: 26 “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. 27 So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: 28 In this wilderness your bodies will fall—even every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. 29 Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 30 As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. 31 But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness. 32 Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. 33 For forty years—one year...
for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.’ 35 I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this wilderness; here they will die.’ 36 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— 37 these men who were responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. 38 Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. 39 When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly.

3. The window of faith usually opens widest at a place of absolute hopelessness. The hopeless moments when we wonder where God is, may be the best moments for us to launch out.

- “Our God is able to deliver us. We believe He will. But even if He doesn’t, we will never stop serving Him!” – Shadrach, Meschech, and Abed-Nego in Daniel 3:16-18

4. It is vain to try to force the door open once it has closed. – (14:39-45)

39 When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly. 40 Early the next morning they set out for the highest point in the hill country, saying, “Now we are ready to go up to the land the LORD promised. Surely we have sinned!” 41 But Moses said, “Why are you disobeying the LORD’s command? This will not succeed! 42 Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, 43 for the Amalekites and the Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword.” 44 Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the highest point in the hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD’s covenant moved from the camp. 45 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.

5. When we fail, we have to repeat the test. They had failed God ten times. You have to find a place where you finally say, Live or die, we are The Lord’s!

- The Red Sea
- The Waters of Marah
- Hunger
- Gluttony
• Thirst at Rephidim
• Idolatry of the Golden Calf
• Complaining at Taberah
• Unthankfulness
• Grumbling against Leadership
• Unbelief at Kadesh Barnea

6. Persistent failure can become terminal.

• Some people never do come to a point of faith.

• Zechariah (Luke 2) is an example of those who are sometimes blessed not “because of their life, but are blessed in spite of their life.

• Beware lest you become Gabriel-proofed.

• I am confident they went to heaven, but they never fulfilled their destiny. Even the amazing provision was God’s second best. They were kept alive only to raise the next generation.

• Grab hold of the opportunity now before failure becomes terminal.

Next week: What does it mean to become fully persuaded?

Romans 4:19-21 KJV

19And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: 20He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.