



[Hebrews 4:1-2](#)

(1) Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (2) For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

New King James Version

The gospel's sure promise of an endless life in glory in the [Kingdom of God](#) as the Father's spirit-composed children and Jesus Christ's brothers and companions seems so appealing and captivating that one wonders why we would need more motivation than the anticipation of its fulfillment. History and even our own reflections on our personal experiences prove that we need additional stimulation.

The Israelites' forty-year trek through the wilderness after their release from Egyptian slavery also provides a persuasive record. Of the over two million or so Israelites age twenty and above who left Egypt, only two men, Joshua and Caleb, are named as entering into the Promised Land! The Israelites were burying the bodies of those who failed until the time they crossed the Jordan River. [Hebrews 4:1-2](#) admonishes us not to fall into the same manner of living.

The struggle to achieve some noteworthy goal is a popular theme for many inspirational biographies, novels, articles, and movies. In the late 1800s, Horatio Alger became famous by authoring a string of "rags to riches" stories that featured characters who, through pluck, grit, ingenuity, and seemingly tireless energy, overcame multitudes of problems to achieve success in the end. The characters in his stories never resorted to deceit or thievery, even though they confronted such vices. They always made their way in a righteous manner. Many inspired readers used them as role models for what they hoped to achieve. Not much has changed in the intervening time. People still find [hope](#) and inspiration in hearing the success stories of others, especially if they are dealing with true-to-life issues. One can buy "success" manuals in virtually any bookstore. Lecture circuits teem with those who are willing to sell their formulas to those who want

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to hear their testimonies.

Obviously, motivation is a very common human problem, one that the Bible also addresses. The Bible contains many passages intended to prod us to keep moving in the proper direction. Nevertheless, the condition posed earlier remains unresolved. If what [God](#) offers is so awesome, why do we need to be prodded with exhortation, encouragement, and correction?

It is because God has demanded that we live by [faith](#) ([Hebrews 10:38-39](#)). Thus, the "out of sight, out of mind" principle provides an almost constant resistance, testing whether we have a proper and purposeful direction to our life.

It is also because human nature is so attracted to the cultures it has created that it loves them almost desperately. Sometimes it is only with great difficulty that one can turn from them ([I John 2:15-16](#)). Even though we know intellectually that these cultures are evil, we are attracted to them and diverted away from the path of godly success ([Galatians 1:4](#)).

Moreover, the unseen spirit world lures us through lying persuasions away from the right goal ([Ephesians 6:10-12](#)). Sometimes we need motivation because of traits such as apathy and procrastination that dwell to some degree in all of us ([Hebrews 2:1-3](#); [12:12-13](#)). Finally, sometimes our [pride](#) self-righteously and presumptuously persuades us into thinking that we already have it made ([Revelation 3:16-18](#)).

Overall, a great many factors work against us. When we seriously consider the example of the extremely high failure rate of the Israelites in the wilderness, it may seem as though far more of these factors work against us than work to insure our success. The Israelites, however, operated with little faith. In addition, the Scriptures indicate that God gave very few of them His [Holy Spirit](#), and therefore the [love](#) of God was not working in them. God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him ([Acts 5:32](#)), and the record of the Israelites is one of almost constant disobedience.

Since [Jesus Christ](#) was not in them, they did not have the faith of Christ, but our God is able to "supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ" ([Philippians 4:19](#)). The reality is that we have far more working in our behalf than they. We have no valid reason to fail.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

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[The Elements of Motivation \(Part One\): Fear](#)

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