

When Testings Come

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2).

These are unusual times we are living in. God both refines and purifies His people—two processes that require heat. The heat comes in the form of tests that target the hearts and emotions of believers. Angels and demons are watching to see the reactions and responses these testings bring about.

This booklet discusses God’s process of testing and describes the victories Christians will celebrate as they enjoy the privilege and reward for standing. The prize will go to the overcomers—those who do not faint when the heat comes (Jeremiah 17:8).

Chapter One

REVELATIONS OF THE HEART

“And such as violate the covenant he shall pervert and seduce with flatteries, but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong and shall stand firm and do exploits [for God].

“And they who are wise and understanding among the people shall instruct many and make them understand, though some [of them and their followers] shall fall by the sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for many days.

“Now when they fall, they shall receive a little help. Many shall join themselves to them with flatteries and hypocrisies.

“And some of those who are wise, prudent, and understanding shall be weakened and fall, [thus, then, the insincere among the people will lose courage and become deserters. It will be a test] to refine, to purify, and to make those among [God’s people] white, even to the time of

the end, because it is yet for the time [God] appointed" (Daniel 11:32-35, from The Amplified Bible translation).

Tests That God Ordains for Our Lives

God has appointed many different tests, or trials, for His people. Among them are momentum tests, sanctificational tests, and tests of prosperity, poverty, health, satanic warfare, and relationships. Believers will be wounded by the trials, or they will be humbled before God in the trials and tests.

Momentum tests measure how we have grown with God, while giving us the opportunity to implement what we have learned from the Word of God.

Sanctificational tests come to help believers grow as they learn to apply God's Word in the daily experience of their lives. The Word of God will become reality to believers when they learn to apply it and depend on it in difficult situations.

In the prosperity test, God may try the believer with success, economic blessings, material blessings, and substantial financial gain in order to reveal the believer's heart. That person will either keep following God and share his

blessings as God leads, or his heart will become passive and disinterested to God and His Word.

God may also test a believer with a time of poverty. In that test, the believer may become bitter and withdraw from God, or he may remain faithful and draw even closer to God as his supply.

The health or sickness test determines what that person will do with the blessing of good health, or how he will deal with sickness in relationship to God.

In another test, God can expose a believer to satanic warfare to reveal how much he has grown into Christ's image (consider Job).

God can also test a person's spirituality through a relationship: Will the believer stay true to the Word, or will he be sentimental and not make a stand if the other person in the relationship goes against the Word of God?

Facing a Spiritual Showdown

From time to time, God has to clean house because familiarity and secret sins have crept in. Therefore, Spirit-taught Christians understand what is happening during times of testing.

Facing a test is not fun. God allows people to become weak in testings. He does the same

with ministries, the prudent, and the wise. God knows that some have heard a message from their pastor about testing, but they have no idea what it means or how to implement it. Some people are wise intellectually and have an understanding through their perceptions of life and observations of facts. But God determines that it is time for a cycle of testing that will shake up the church and separate those who refuse to be one with God and with the vision of that church.

God will test the pastor. He will test the church leadership, and He knows that most will come through. Ninety-nine out of one hundred will come through as victorious. Yet, God allows the tests to reveal who will react, who will leave a ministry, and who will wilt under the pressure of any major attack.

Weakening and Exposition

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:19-20).

The first group of people who fail the tests is made up of those whose flesh has been built up by flatteries and hypocrisies. These people have never come to an understanding of categorical doctrine. They have not received precise truth to build up their spiritual capacities.

The next group fails because God Himself allows Satan to weaken them (Isaiah 14:12)]. God uses weakness to humble us when we need it (1 Corinthians 11:30), to help us identify with others (1 Corinthians 9:22), and to magnify His strength in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

John the apostle didn't speak ambiguously in his first letter. He wasn't afraid of what people would say. He told them, "Those who leave are not really of us. That is why they go. They do not leave because of the reasons they tell us. They go because they are not of us."

The test of any Christian ministry, as to whether it is of God, is in its message and its fruit. First, we can test the doctrine that they teach and preach by comparing it with what the Bible says (Acts 17:11). Then, we can test their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20).^{*} Furthermore, one should consider the blessings that come by association. Many people who may not have produced much fruit outwardly will be rewarded

with a crown of life for their faithfulness (Revelation 2:8-10).

Wilderness Experiences

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deuteronomy 8:2).

God brings in tests just as He did with Israel in the wilderness. For forty years, God brought tests to humble and prove the nation of Israel, and to see if she would obey Him.

Picture the crowd in that wilderness after the spies came back with their evil reports of the Promised Land. After forty years of testing, preparation, and many opportunities to get right, except for Joshua and Caleb, only the men and women under twenty years of age survived. They were tested and they responded by murmuring against Moses, gossiping against him, and committing fornication and idolatry. And even when they arrived and they saw the land with their own eyes, they doubted God’s ability to bring them in safely.

Think of it: An entire generation were led—

and kept—by God as they wandered through the wilderness. Yet they could not enter the Promised Land.

God is always looking for opportunities to redeem His people. His greatest desire is to draw us, one by one, into the Promised Land where we will live and reign with Him forever. Our failure, therefore, is never final unless we refuse the grace and mercy of God that will lift us up and cause us to stand in the face of our enemy.

**Read Staying Focused to Bear Fruit, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002, for a full account of the fruit of the Spirit that a godly man (and therefore a godly church) should bear.*

Chapter Two

THE TESTING PROCESS

“This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

“Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart” (2 Chronicles 32:30-31).

It is interesting that so many Christians do not understand testing. Hezekiah was tested so that God might expose what was in the king’s heart. God wants to reveal our hearts. We will be tested, and we cannot escape what our hearts will do when we are tested. Sooner or later, if God allows us to be tested, our hearts will reveal what we are like. Tests reveal self-centeredness and self-preservation. Tests expose the selfish

adventures we pursue without God and the Bible.

The Word of God must guard our hearts. The heart is not protected unless the Holy Spirit protects it. Your heart cannot experience a victory unless the victory comes by faith. Your heart cannot hold itself together unless it is held by grace.

God uses all kinds of situations to test our hearts. He uses marriages, families, and finances. He uses death, diseases, and even accidents. Though He is not the author of evil, he will allow evil to happen in order to bring us to Himself (Amos 3:6-7). Still, the average person does not know why tests come; he does not relate to them in truth the way he ought. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself will continue to pursue all men with a heart to win them.

Weighing on the Mind

“But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter” (Jeremiah 12:3).

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3).

The first testing God brings in involves men-

tal attitudes. He does not test us simply for overt responses, but to reveal what the mind will do. If my mind does not respond according to the Word of God, then my heart is not right. Either my faith will work in the patience of God (which is a mystery), or I will become strange, reactionary, or indifferent.

A Christian may come down with a disease. It's a test for him. It didn't just happen. What will this Christian do with this test? With what mental attitude will he respond? What overt physical reaction will be made evident? Three types of faith can be revealed in the midst of testing: faith to survive, faith to maintain, and faith to deliver. Will he use faith to resist this attack? How much faith will he utilize to fight it?

Some Christians respond to tests in sentimentality. They believe in God, and they love Him with all their hearts, but they take on the identity of the tests they are going through rather than the purpose. They may take on the name of "pain" or "sickness" instead of "peace" or "long suffering." And when they put a name to their pain, that is how the demons perceive the Christian. Other names people take on include "reactionary," "moody," "fearful," "insecure," "proud," and "lustful"—people take on

all kinds of names in tests.

People who are in bondage to pornography must realize that pornography is the name they carry in the demonic world. When God tests these folks, the devil puts it before their minds, allowing pictures to coordinate with what is going on in their unconscious minds. The result is subjective reflections and objective experiences.

Targeting the Heart

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

“Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous trieth the hearts and reins (Psalm 7:9).

The first thing God tests are the emotions, because they are so revealing. Every test we go through involves our emotions, since they are a prime indicator when something is not right on a deeper level. Then, God tests the heart—the motivator and communications center for our thinking. It is the automatic starter with its substance of thought, definition of words, and com-

munication of philosophy.

More people become spiritually stagnant when they are under tests than at any other time. They often turn inward and become self-conscious instead of God-conscious. When that happens, a wall of protection goes up, isolating and restricting the flow of the river of Life to the conscious and subconscious mind. Some become stagnant when they face the momentum test of prosperity, while others cannot face the momentum test of poverty.

Then there is the test where God allows us to become weak. We pray and then we grow weak. We pray again and we grow even weaker. God wants the angels to see what we are like when we go through these tests, and the greatest example of that is the life of Job. But more than that, He wants to reveal what we are like so we will understand how He plans to use us as He builds the Church through evangelism with discipleship.

When Job finally got the picture that he was not the issue, he stopped mentally defending his flesh and began to pray for his friends that accused him (Job 42:10). That is when everything turned around, and he experienced a divine reversal.

Chapter Three

RAIMENTS OF BRIGHT WHITE

Tests are designed to reveal how our hearts will respond. The question is this: Will we be preoccupied with the test and ourselves, or will we be occupied with Christ? We can be absolutely victorious and triumphant in conquering the situation when we are occupied with Christ.

Throughout my ministry, I have faced many tests. Then God brought in tests for the entire assembly. Thank God for those times of testing! As a church, we have seen so many victories when our faith was challenged. God has to test anyone that is self-occupied, and strengthen them to be occupied with Christ.

My years in Baltimore have been so much fun because of the wonderful Christ-occupied assembly we have. Every one of us is frail; every one of us has weaknesses. But together our strengths have made for such fun times. We have grown into a diligent assembly, a vigorous

assembly, and a visionary assembly.

Prayer is one area where we need to be strengthened. We are now setting aside several hours during the week so that we can pray together as a body—the corporate Body of Christ. I am talking about the kind of prayer that will change everything. We want to establish a fervent approach to prayer—the kind of prayer that touches God’s heart.

With prayer, I believe that people who have refused to get right with God will come under the strongest testing ever. And, some will leave. It is not that we are praying for this to happen; but we are praying, and God is moving, taking care of His Church.

Power of Positive Decisions

“And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed” (Daniel 11:35).

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will con-

fess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:4-5).

In Daniel 11, we read that those who stay through tests shall be “made white”—literally, clothed in white raiment (Revelation 3:5). That is what happens when we become positive toward God in the tests that come to our mind, emotions, and body. When we make positive choices in difficult tests, a degree of glory is added to the raiment that will cover our glorified bodies in eternity for every single detail we encounter.

Here is how it works: If I make three positive decisions in the midst of a temptation or test, then three degrees of glory would be added to my soul body. These degrees are stored up for the white raiment we will wear.

In Matthew 17, Jesus wore glorified garments over His glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration. His raiment was described as a brilliant white light. Everyone in heaven will have glorified bodies. However, those who make fantastic decisions in the midst of trials will have something special over their bodies. These degrees of brightness will astound and astonish those with normal raiment.*

Trying the Reins

“Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psalm 26:2).

David was saying, “God, I want You to test me to see how I feel in my emotions and my heart.” He prayed that God would examine and prove him. He wanted God to test him to see if he could remain satisfied in the place where God had him. He wanted the Lord to see if he could be approved.

Nothing in the Bible just happened. David wrote, “Try my reins (meaning “emotions”) and my heart.” Again, the Holy Spirit put the emotions before the heart, because the emotions are so revealing and the heart is more psychological, and therefore less obvious. David wanted God to check his emotions first so that his emotions would reveal what was going on inside of him.

“I can’t always tell what is going on with my heart because it is so deceitful,” David was thinking.

David knew that these tests would determine something about his destiny.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through

manifold temptations” (1 Peter 1:6).

If you are going through a time of testing, trust God, remember His promises, and let Him accomplish His work in you. It is all for our sake, and to bring glory to His name.

**For more about being clothed with white raiment in degrees of glory, read The Morning Star Order, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

The godly choices we make as individuals all work together to determine the degrees of glory for those who will be in heaven. Experiences, circumstances, and details are all used in the process and program of testing. There is not a Christian who has ever been promoted who has not also been tested hundreds of times.

This message was given to assure us that testing will come. We will be evaluated in the midst of every test. Then, God may wait awhile, having provided several messages and circumstances to instruct us, and then bring things into our lives to see how we will respond in the next test.

The issue is not what we say when we are tested. Rather, God watches six areas of our lives: what I think in the test; how I feel in the test; what I do while the test is going on; how I respond to God in the test; how I react to people; and how I treat people when I am being

tested.

Dear Father, we are so thankful that You do not keep us guessing when we go through tests. You have spoken clearly to us in the Word and from the pulpit, in a confident yet quiet voice. We desire to see Your purpose accomplished through those tests. Keep our hearts soft before You. In Jesus' name, Amen.