

God Test - cont.

However, we only receive the full benefit of God's tests and fully glorify Him if we endure to the end. If we try to short-circuit the process, or quit, then we will fail to "let steadfastness have its full effect."

4. We need to humbly welcome God's testing.

Because of the spiritual benefit of being tested by God, His people throughout history have invited Him to put them through tests to reveal their flaws and refine their character.

- Psalm 26:2 - *Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind.*
- Psalm 139:23 - *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

God's people invite divine testing because they know that we are blind to our own faults, and we need His perspective if we are to change and grow. "*I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Eventually the conversation over God's sovereignty during testing turns to considering what He causes and what He allows. But that is a subject for another day. Always remember that whatever God in His sovereignty is leading you through, He is

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good, He is powerful, and He knows what He is doing. Humbly and patiently endure it. Let steadfastness have its full effect, and bring Him glory for the strength that He provides for this moment!

Finally, let's make sure to let God tell us what He does and does not do, instead of solely relying on our personal experiences and ideas. God has given us answers in His word. Let's trust those answers even as we're wrestling. If we solely rely on our experiences and personal ideas, we will reach some faulty conclusions about God and His character.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Guest Article: Does God Test People? by Jeremy Dehut

James 1:2-4 - *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Recently I attended a Bible study where a brother was wrestling with God's sovereignty and goodness. Trust me, as a 37-year-old father who has experienced the loss of two children, I am familiar with that struggle! Our brother was wrestling with James' inspired description of Job as an example of someone who experienced God's intentional compassion and mercy (James 5:11) and our friend made some pretty strong statements that I think need examining. Let's think through the topic for just a minute.

1. In God's sovereignty He tests us. The Biblical text says that God does indeed test us.

- Exodus 16:4 - *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, **that I may test them**, whether they will walk in my law or not.*

- Exodus 20:20 - *Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, **for God has come to test you**, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."*

- Deuteronomy 8:2 - *And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, **testing you** to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.*

- Deuteronomy 8:16 - *...who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, **that he might humble you and test you**, to do you good in the end.*

Now, does God tempt people in order to get them to sin? No, He does not (James 1:13-14)! What we observe in difficult moments is that both God and Satan each have a course of action they want us to take. God wants our difficult moments to be occasions that produce deeper faith and refined character, while Satan wants us to selfishly give in to temptation and develop destructive, sinful habits that take us away from God. There are several examples of this dynamic at work. Think about Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6), or the temptation of Jesus where the Holy Spirit leads Jesus to the wilderness, but Satan uses the event to attempt to lure Jesus to sin (Matthew 4:1-11).

2. God's sovereign testing sometimes takes the form of difficult circumstances.

In the case of Israel, their testing took place in the wilderness years, experiencing both lack and plenty. After decades of hardship (he experienced assault, attempted murder, human trafficking, slander, false arrest and imprisonment, etc.) Joseph's perspective about

the course of his life was that God had been using even the sinful decisions of others in His sovereign plan. *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are to-day"* (Genesis 50:20).

Whether we are experiencing circumstances that are the result of someone's sinful decisions, or we are suffering because we live in world that has been cursed because of sin, none of it escapes the power of God to use it for the good of His people, in order to make us more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).

3. There are blessings for those who faithfully trust in God's sovereignty and goodness and endure testing.

God's testing is for our good! He uses it to help us learn things about ourselves, that in His omniscience He already knows. When we respond to what God's testing reveals in a humble and honest way, we grow.

When we grow because of what God is accomplishing in us, especially when the test is difficult, it brings glory and praise to God! *"...so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:7).

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