

Test My Heart, O Lord

Scripture Portion for the Journey

“Beloved, do not be amazed and bewildered at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test your quality, as though something strange (unusual and alien to you and your position) were befalling you. But insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, rejoice, so that when His glory [full of radiance and splendor] is revealed, you may also rejoice with triumph [exultantly]. If you are censured and suffer abuse [because you bear] the name of Christ, blessed [are you—happy, fortunate, to be envied, with life-joy, and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of your outward condition], because the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of God, is resting upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified.” 1 Peter 4:12-14 (AMP)

We serve a God who tests His people! One of the certainties of our Christian walk is that God is watching over us and providing us with tests by which we are able to demonstrate our faith in Him and our obedience to His Word. Difficult times demonstrate our level of spiritual maturity and prepare us for greater responsibility in His work. Our life in this world is a time of preparation for living and reigning in His Kingdom with our Savior. We can take great comfort in knowing that God is the one who is allowing us to go through the time of testing or trial and He will not allow us to be overcome by the trial. He wants to raise us up to be overcomers! Ps. 11:4-5; Ps. 18:33 (Amp); 66:10; Prov. 17:3; Jer. 11:20; 20:12a; Hab. 3:19 (Amp); 1 Thes. 2:4; Job 7:17-18

In the Word, trials, tests, tribulations and persecutions are all often correlated with fires or fiery ordeals. In times of testing, His fires of purification burn brightest in our lives. The more we recognize and understand God's ways in times of testing, the greater victory we will find to walk through the trials victoriously. In times of testing our hearts are refined. Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines "refine" as "to purify, to separate the precious from the worthless, as in metals. To purify in mind or principles, to give or implant in the mind a perception of truth, justice and propriety. To separate from that which is coarse, rude and improper. A clearing of all dross, dregs, and recement." He refines our hearts, by bringing impurities to the light so they can be removed. He shows us what is in our own hearts so we can be brought to repentance. The heart is deceitful above all else. We cannot always be aware of the sin that resides deep within our hearts. 1 Cor. 3:13-15

It is a comfort to know that God chooses the time, place and manner of testing. God gives us beautiful picture to hold fast to during these seasons. It is the picture of the Master Craftsmen of precious metals placing his unrefined silver or gold ore into the "melting pot." The refiner's fire is not an incinerator, it is a carefully controlled fire to test or purify. The length of time and temperature is monitored closely by the refiner. The pot is slowly heated over the fire. The refiner knows a fire that is too hot will ruin the gold or silver, but the perfect amount of heat will melt the metal and allow the impurities to rise to the top. He then carefully skims the surface to remove "the dross." Dross is likened to our sins, carnal nature, weaknesses that make us susceptible to temptation or bribery. The refining of precious metals is a process in which the metals are placed into even hotter fires until there is no dross left. The refiner knows the metal is pure when he can see his face reflected in the shine of the metal's perfection. Mal. 3:3; Zech. 13:9

1 Peter 1:7 assures us "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Christ." We are of immense more value to God than gold or silver! God is always with us in the test and is there as a source of provision to help us to pass the test!

What is a test?

Two words in the Greek New Testament refer to testing but to different kinds of testing.

1. Dokimazo: the act of testing someone or something for the purpose of approving it or finding acceptable. To pass one's examination in order to receive a degree, passing to prove that one is fit for public office. Approval or sanction. The trial itself is made with the expectation and hope that the test will be surmounted. Prove, try, examine, approve, discern and ascertain or verify to be genuine. This word is used with reference to God's testing of His children. Remember, Job was not tested to find out if he was righteous, but because he was righteous! God allowed Job's righteousness to be tested to demonstrate that righteousness to the rulers in the heavenly realms. Job 1:8; Luke 14:19; Rom. 14:22; 1 Thes. 2:4

2. Peirazo: to pierce, search, tempt. To try or test intentionally with the purpose to discover what is good or evil, what power or weakness was in a person or thing. The fact that men so often break down under this test gave peirazo a predominant sense of putting to the proof with the intention and hope that the one put to the test will break down under the test. While peirazo is used at times with reference to God, it is more often translated "tempt" and is used with reference to Satan. Temptation is the solicitation to do evil arising from the devil through enticement of our carnal nature. Satan seeks to tempt us to do evil, to solicit us to do evil. God will never tempt us to do evil! Jesus taught us to pray that we will be led away from temptation. John 6:6; Matt. 4:1, 7; James 1:13

In the Old Testament, there are a number of Hebrew words that also refer to "testing."

1. Test "bahan" (Strong's 974). The most frequently used word for "test," this word means to try, prove, examine or scrutinize. It denotes examining to discern the essential qualities, especially integrity. It is used almost exclusively in spiritual and religious realms with reference to gold, persons, the heart or the man of God. It is a primitive root and along with its derivatives, it is used 32x in the Old Testament, mostly in Job, Psalms and Jeremiah. Almost all references relate to God's examination of His people. Ps. 7:9; 11:4; 17:3 1 Chron. 29:17; Job 7:18; 23:10; Prov. 17:3
2. Examine "paqad" (Strong's 6485) To attend to, to muster the troops, visit, look after, care for, pay attention, pass in review, to collect the troops in order to review, inspect to be approved and found ready. The idea is that the troops would be assembled and examined before battle in order to find those who are ready to go to war.
3. Search "haqar" (Strong's 2713) a primitive root to penetrate, hence, to examine intimately, find out, seek out, a difficult, diligent probing. Jer. 17:10; Job 13:9; Ps. 139:1, Ps. 44:21 1 Chron. 28:9
4. Prove "nasa" (Strong's 5254) (*nāsâ*) <H5254> test, try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof, put to the test. In most contexts *nāsâ* has the idea of testing or proving the quality of someone or something, often through adversity or hardship. The rendering *tempt*, used frequently by the AV and ASV, generally means *prove, test, put to the test*, rather than the current English idea of "entice to do wrong." The verb *nāsâ* occurs 36 times in the OT. The largest number of references, however, deal with situations where a person or a nation is undergoing a trial or difficult time brought about by another. Though man is forbidden to put God to the test (Deut. 6:16), the OT records that he did so. The wilderness place of Massah ("trial") becomes a byword in this regard, often combined in a play on words with *nāsâ*, "to try (Exodus 17:2, 7; Deut. 6:16; Deut. 33:8; Psalm 95:8, 9; cf. Deut. 9:22). Those who put God to the proof in

the wilderness would not see Canaan (Numbers 14:22-23). The hymns of Israel reflect this defiant attitude (see Psalm 78:18, 41, 56; Psalm 106:14). On occasion, one man would try or put another man to the test. Thus, the Queen of Sheba tested Solomon with hard questions (1 Kings 10:1; 2 Chron. 9:1); the chief of the eunuchs tested the appearance of Daniel and his friends after they ate vegetables for ten days (Daniel 1:12, 14); false prophets sometimes were the instrument for testing a man's faith (Deut. 13:3 [H 4]). Often, however, God is the One responsible for bringing testings and trials upon man. God delivered Israel by sending "great trials" upon the Egyptians (Deut. 7:19; Deut. 29:3); but he later tested Israel by the Canaanite nations (Judges 2:22; Judges 3:1, 4). Likewise, *nāsā* is used when God tested both Abraham (Genesis 22:1) and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:31). Such testing by God, however, was not without intent. It was to refine the character of man that he might walk more closely in God's ways (Exodus 16:4; Deut. 8:2; Judges 2:22; 2 Chron. 32:31; Psalm 26:1-3). Theological Wordbook of the OT

5. Refine "tsaraph" (Strong's 6884) goldsmith, to smelt, to refine, to test or purify metal, any refining, literal or figurative, to prove true, smelt, refine by fire, melting process whereby impurities are removed from precious metals such as gold or silver. Ps. 26:2; Ps. 66:10; Zech. 13:9; Ps. 12:6; Ps. 17:3, 66:10; Isa. 1:25

Why does God test us? Doesn't He already know everything that is in our hearts? His Word is clear that He knows us inside out. He knows us better than we know ourselves! We can have greater strength in times of trials and testing if we realize God allows trials to purify and refine us and so He can show us what is in our hearts! We are the ones who do not know our hearts' true condition. These tests are not just to show us our sin and weakness, they also show us the triumph of God's work in us, to encourage us that His Spirit dwells in us and brings us to places we never thought possible. Tests are opportunities for us to demonstrate our faith, our love and our trust in Him.

- **He tests us to reveal our responses to situations.** We have all observed how a horrific event, such as a tornado devastating a town brings out both the best and the worst in people. Some turn to looting and violence while others show forth courage and true acts of heroism, they never believed themselves capable. He tests us to prove the genuineness of our faith. God will create situations or circumstances in our lives to stretch or refine our faith. Faith is not just an important element in our prayers, those who believe are to live by faith. Every moment of every day gives us the opportunity to demonstrate our faith and trust in the LORD and the promises of His Word. God's test's our faith so that we can deepen our faith. 1 Peter 1:3-9
- **God tests us to see what is in our hearts.** Many verses that speak of testing are related to seeing the "integrity" of one's heart. Biblical Integrity is not just a commitment to honesty, it actually relates to the wholeness or perfection of a heart for the LORD. When we test the integrity of a ship, it is to determine if the ship will remain reliable when placed into the most critical situations, straining every aspect of its construction. It is said of the Titanic, one of the most remarkable ships ever built, that it literally came apart at the seams because the builder chose to cut corners and used inferior rivets by which to hold the ship's plates in the hull together. Under normal conditions it looked great, but when put to the test, it failed! Jer. 12:3; Prov. 17:3; Ps. 17:3 Ps. 139:1-2, 23,24; 1 Chron. 28:9; 29:17; 2 Chron. 6:30; Deut. 8:2; Ps. 26:2; 44:21; Jer. 17:10; 1 Thes. 2:4; Matt. 9:4; 5:8
- **He searches our minds (not just our actions)** and is intimately acquainted with our thoughts and responses in various trials. A person's thoughts direct and form his actions. (see Matt. 5:27,28) Ps. 7:9 states, "A trier of hearts and reins (minds) is the righteous God. The word for reins is also translated mind. The idea of reins is helpful in understanding what God is looking at when He tests our minds. Reins, as worn on a horse's bridle, according to Webster's 1828 dictionary, are the

instruments of curbing or restraining or governing actions and that guide the direction that we are to take. In the Hebrew, this word is translated “kidney” which is an essential organ, figurative of the mind, representing the interior self.

- **But what if we fail the test?** In John 16:33, Jesus told the disciples they were all going to fail Him and fall away when He was arrested. As He warned them about this ahead of time, He said something very interesting. He said, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.” Have you ever really thought about these words? How can knowing you are going to fail a test give you peace? Bob Sorge, in his book, “The Fires of Delayed Answers,” offered a very helpful insight. It is that God does not expect us to pass every test. He allows tests to humble us, to show us our weaknesses and cause us to lay down our foolish pride and reliance upon self. Dwight Hill, in his book, “The Facts of the Matter” said, “Our true mettle is revealed not in times of success but in times of testing..., times of failure.”

Peter was full of confidence in his ability to stand firmly for the LORD and declared that though the others fall away, he definitely would not. He declared he was willing to go to prison or die in order to stay with Jesus. Jesus knew this was not true, but Peter needed to experience the weakness of his own resolves. Jesus prayed for Peter that in this trial his faith would not fail him. When Jesus went to Peter after His resurrection, He did not show any disappointment or anger toward Peter. Instead, while Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus now asks Peter three times if he loves Him. He said, “Peter, do you love Me more than these (the other disciples)? ... do you have a devotional love for me that is called out of your heart by My preciousness? Do you have a love for Me that impels you to sacrifice yourself for Me? Jesus asks Peter for agape love¹ borne out of devotion that gives without expectation of return. The third question was or do you have a friendly feeling of affection for Me? Peter responds that his love is one of emotion (phileo)². This was all Peter had at the moment to give. He is now honest with the LORD and his understanding of himself. When the Holy Spirit imparted to Peter a greater understanding of agape love, Peter used the word “agape” nine times in his writings.³ Peter had much to write about tests and the blessedness of going through tests! We know that Peter remained faithful to the Lord and was later crucified in a manner similar to Jesus. Luke 22:31-34; 54-62; John 21:12-17

- **At times it may seem as if we cannot endure the trials we are given,** He will never give us more than we can handle with His help! 1 Cor. 10:13⁴ states “There is no testing taken you but such as is common to man, but God will, with the testing, also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Remember, He is always in the fire with us! He wants us to depend on Him.

¹ Agape love is that which gives without expectation of return. Agape is called out of the heart by an awakened sense of the value which causes it to be prized. Esteem and recognition of the worthiness, the soul’s sense of value and preciousness of the object. Scripture gives added meaning to the classical Greek, a love that sacrifices itself for the object loved, whether the object is worthy or not. (See 1 Cor. 13; John 3:16; 19:24; Gal. 5:23; Rom. 5:5; 1 Pet. 1:22) Agape is an enduring love of devotion, whereas Phileo is non-ethical and makes no demands.

² Phileo love (5368) is unimpassioned love, a fondness, care for affectionately, cherish. A friendly love called out of the heart’s response to the pleasure one receives in the person or object being loved. Phileo is the love of liking or delight. Mutual friendship, fondness, liking or affection. (John 16:27) Phileo love is pure intense feeling of love, warm and intimate as between family members, more spontaneous than agape.

³ See “Spirit-filled Life Bible,” Word Wealth, p. 1482 for definition of phileo love.

⁴ Wuest’s Word Studies in the Greek New Testament Vol. III, Treasures from the Greek New Testament.

- **These tests will continue to increase until the end is come.** We should thank the LORD for every trial that comes into our life, knowing that He is preparing us to stand firm in even greater days of testing. Dan. 11:35
- **Ultimately, above all else, it is God’s purpose to test us in order that He is able to do us good.** Tests are often in the context of the deepest emotional pain and suffering, yet in these times of testing we will find this is also the time of our greatest spiritual growth if we cling to the LORD. God desires to develop and mold our character so that we become like Him. Beauty and maturity emerge from pain. Some are given some tests only one time and other tests are given over and over. James 1:2-4 makes it clear that these tests are to produce proven qualities in our hearts and lives that will give us strength to persevere to the very end. If we persevere under trial, we will be rewarded the crown of life. Job is the perfect example of one whose time of testing was portrayed in detail. James 5:11, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the LORD is very compassionate and merciful.” Job understood that he was being tested and that the result would be that he would come forth as gold. It is significant that the book of Job, which is said to be the oldest book of the Bible, focuses on God’s ways in testing. Wouldn’t Job have been amazed to know, while he was going through his trials that we would be studying his life thousands of years later and that his example would give us so much hope, joy and understanding? Could it be that our trials will also bring to others through us lasting encouragement and strength? Ex. 20:20; Job 23:10; Heb. 12:10-12; Deut. 8:16; Rom. 8:28; Ps. 66:8-10

What are the results of our testing if we hold fast and are “approved” by the LORD?

“And not only this, but we exult in our tribulations⁵, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:3-5

1. Purity. Dan. 11:35; 1 Pet. 1:7; Job 23:10 (Amp)
2. We are “approved” through testing (Rom. 16:10 “tried and approved”⁶) 1 Thes. 2:3-4
3. He humbles us Deut. 8:16
4. God molds our character so we can be like Him. We develop “proven character” Rom. 5:3-5
5. We learn perseverance and endurance. James 1:2-4 Job James 5:11
6. To be made perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:4
7. Righteousness Mal. 3:3; Heb. 12:5-11
8. We are given the Crown of life James 1:12
9. Eternal glory in His Kingdom 2 Cor. 4:17
10. We learn the fear of the LORD so that we don’t sin. Ex. 20:20
11. So that in the end it will go well with us. Deut. 8:16
12. He rewards us according to our ways and what is revealed in the testing. Jer. 17:9-10
13. Rich fulfillment (Strong’s 7310) a place of abundance, a wealthy place, a broad, well-watered place of abundance, refreshment, and open air. Ps. 66:10-12

“Beauty and maturity emerge from pain.”

⁵ Tribulation: thilipsis-putting a lot of pressure on that which is free and unfettered, an imprisonment, being bound by circumstances, **the kind of pressure that produces diamonds.**

⁶ Approved (Strong’s #1384-dokimos) A term that is used primarily with reference to the testing of metals or coins which have been found to be pure. It is the stamp of genuineness. (Prov. 8:10; 17:3)

14. He prepares us for responsibilities in the Body of Christ. God often brings us into expanded ministry and fruitfulness after our greatest times of testing. (1 Tim. 3:10; 1 Thes. 2:4; Matt. 25:14-30)

True peace comes when we can learn to enter trials knowing that God is in control and that He will use everything that happens in our lives for good when we are committed to His purposes. This is true even in the times when we fail the test! God wants us to come running to Him, bringing Him every mistake and stumble. God wants us to bring our sins, failings, weaknesses to Him so we can receive His forgiveness and allow His transforming power to work in the areas that were exposed. We don't need to hide from God like Adam and Eve after they sinned. He desires that we are transparent before Him, inviting and allowing His light to reveal anything that separates us from Him.

What to do in a time of trial? It is helpful if we know ahead of time how to respond when we are tested! When we find ourselves in a trial or time of testing, the first thing we need to do is STOP! Do not act until we have sought the LORD. Satan wants to frighten us and provoke us into hasty actions that lead to sin. God wants us to turn to Him first before we seek out help or prayer from friends! We need to pray and assess the situation, ask God for wisdom and strength and His direction. Then we can proceed without presumption. Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the Name of the LORD our God!

1. **Hold fast to the Word of God and rely upon His Promises.** Since we know that our Christian life is one of testing, we need to constantly seek to "study to show ourselves "approved (tested by trial)." Ultimately, God's Word is our test, to see whether we believe it and whether we will act in accordance with His Word. Our primary focus needs to be to keep our eyes fixed on the LORD and not allow the trial or test to distract us from our Beloved Savior. Understanding God's ways through His Word will show us how to respond in the trial. Know that the test itself is part of the learning process and is vital for our spiritual growth. The person who is constantly seeking the LORD, spending time in fellowship and prayer with Him, studying the Word will develop that firm root that Jesus said will help them to stand in times of testing or persecution. The parable of the sower tells us of those who receive the Word with joy but do not develop a firm root in themselves. In times of testing they fall away. Luke 8:13; Ps. 105:19; 119:105; Ps. 94:14; Heb. 13:5-6; Josh. 1:5-7; Ps. 37:8, 25,28; Gen. 28:15; Deut. 31:6,8; Matt. 28:20; Isa. 41:10

2. **Know that God is ever mindful of us!** He is Immanuel, a God who is near to us and when we are in trouble, He is watching us carefully. We are fixed in God's mind and He will never leave us or fail us or forsake us. We may feel that He has in time of testing, but the truth is He is with us! Heb. 2:6; Ps. 8:4; Ps. 94:14; Ps. 37: 8, 25, 28; Matt. 28:20; Isa. 41:10; Gen. 28:15; Deut. 31:6,8; Josh. 1:1-9

3. **The righteous shall live by faith.** Trials are the opportunity to fully exercise and allow our faith to grow. We can know without a bit of uncertainty or doubt that God is with us and will bring us through the trial. Our faith is placed in the character of God, who said He will never leave us, fail us or forsake us. We may not understand the trial or why we are being tested as we are, but we can fully place our faith in God, take our stand and see what He will do in this time of testing. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were placed in the fiery furnace, a fourth figure appeared with them and even the pagans recognized they were protected by the Most High God. When Satan asked to sift Peter like wheat, Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail him. Faith is a critical component of all tests and we need to pray for others going through trials that their faith will not fail them in time of testing. Daniel 3:8-30; Luke 22:31-34; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; 5:8-9

4. **"...buy from Me gold refined by fire so you may become rich..."** Rev. 3:18 When trials and testings come, we can respond by resisting (Jonah) or choose to buy "gold tried in the fire" which expresses true and living *faith* tested by fiery trials through the furnace of affliction. We can ask the LORD to purify our hearts and

purchase as much gold as possible while it is available through the refining process.⁷ Ephesians 5:15-16 exhorts us to walk "...not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil (full of afflictions, abounding in troubles and persecutions.)" The phrase "making the most of your time" means to "redeem the time, to buy back, to buy up all that is anywhere to be found. Not to allow a suitable moment to pass by unheeded. (Strong's 2540 is "Kairos" meaning an opportune time, due time, seasonable time, and proper time for action. Kairos describes quality of time, whereas "chronos" describes the amount of time.) So, when we are tested, we should make the most of these opportune times to grow our faith and allow God to purify us. We do not "buy" this gold with money, but through the stretching of our faith to die to self and the desires of the flesh, so we can allow His fire to do His greatest work in our hearts. Isa. 55:1-3

5. "Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing..." The word **surprised** means that we should not be amazed or feel there is a novelty to our trials. Instead we should receive them as a guest and show them hospitality. We should not be dismayed or afraid or fret when we are going through trials. We may not be responsible for the trial, but we are responsible for how we respond. Fear is the opposite of faith. Faith allows us to look at the most extreme outcomes and continue to put our faith in Him to take us through the trial. As we study God's Word, we can clearly see that He has told us to be prepared for trials... to expect them. He wants us to have peace, even in the midst of the worst of trials! Jesus spoke to the disciples, saying, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:31-33 (KJV); Jer. 17:7-8; Ps. 37; 1 Pet. 4:12

6. We should consider it all joy [rejoice and delight greatly] when we are tried. Joy ("charis") is closely bound to the idea of great blessedness. No trial is pleasant at the time, but if we truly understand the value of trials, we can thank the LORD for every trial, even when we don't understand them. This joy in the LORD is a source of strength to endure the trial and a witness to others. James 1:2-4; Neh. 8:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:10-11

7. Thank Him in everything and for everything. We please the LORD when we thank Him for those things that we cannot even understand because we are acknowledging that He is fully trustworthy and will use it all for good. A heart that is thankful remains soft toward God and pliable in His hands because we acknowledge His sovereignty in every situation. There are many who turned away from following Jesus because they became offended in Him. 1 Thes. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:57; Ps. 34:1; Eph. 5:20; Ps. 138:2b; Luke 17:15-18

8. Praise and worship Him in the midst of all trials. When Israel went into exile, God asked them if they would hang their harp on a willow tree and cease worshipping Him. When we offer sacrificial praise and thanksgiving to our God, we lift our eyes above our circumstances and look to the excellences of our LORD and King. "Worship from the heart in times of adversity implies an attitude of humble acceptance on our part of

⁷ The verse in Rev. 3:18 is defined by Jamison Faucet Brown Commentary: **gold tried in, &c.**—literally, "*fired (and fresh) from the fire,*" that is, just fresh *from* the furnace which has proved its purity, and retaining its bright gloss. Sterling spiritual wealth, as contrasted with its counterfeit, in which Laodicea boasted itself. Having bought this *gold*, she will be no longer *poor* (Rev. 3:17). **mayest be rich**—Greek, "mayest be enriched." **white raiment**—"garments." Laodicea's wools were famous. Christ offers infinitely whiter raiment. so "white raiment," *Christ's righteousness* imputed to the believer in justification and imparted in sanctification. (A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.)

God's right to do as He pleases in our lives.⁸ God moves on our behalf when we praise Him. Job 1:20-22; Ps. 50:14, 15, 23

9. **We may groan under the weight of our trials, but we must be careful not to grumble.** Israel was laid low in the wilderness through their grumbling and complaining. Yet the Psalms are full of examples of David bringing all of his complaints and questions to the LORD. The difference is that David turned to the LORD in His complaint. How often have you responded to a trial by saying, "God, this is not fair! Why is this happening to me? I don't deserve to be treated this way." It is OK to bring these complaints to the Lord but we must be careful that in our questioning, we do not demand that God give an account of Himself to us. Job is one who was tested most severely, yet Job 1:22 says that "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Ps. 42-Ps. 43; Ps. 38:8; Ps. 77:3; Ps. 142:2; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 10:1-12; 9a, 5a

10. **Ask the LORD to tell you what He is trying to teach you** and to give you wisdom and guidance to know how to walk through the trial in a way that is pleasing to the LORD. We can invite the LORD to search our heart and show us our sin. Cast yourself upon the LORD and ask Him to keep your heart faithful to Him. Pray that He will guide you along paths of righteousness. David had a heart after God's own heart and he understood that the tests would create in him a pure heart. He embraced God's tests and frequently asked the LORD to test his heart, to find if there was any wicked way within him. Ps. 139:22-23; Ps. 26:2-3

11. **We must be careful not to lose heart [faint, grow weary, despondent or discouraged]!** We guard our hearts from against the fear, worry, fretting, anger, or bitterness that can come in during a trial. We need to choose faith over fear and put our trust in the LORD in the midst of the trial. Worry, anxiety and fear are all sin because they are the opposite of faith and trust in the LORD. The Lord warned us against fretting because this will lead us into sin. Remember that God is our Victory who has created us to be conquerors and to make us victorious through Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 4:1-2, 16-18 reminds us that we do not lose heart because even though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day, and verse 17 makes it clear why we do not lose heart! "For this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." Eph. 3:13; Jer. 17:7-8, 10, Ps. 37:3-7; Neh. 6:13; Ps. 27:13

12. **Set your heart to wait upon the LORD in patience and with great hope!** In times of trial, we need to choose to put our faith, trust and hope in God and His character. This is an opportunity for us to see who we turn to and rely upon in times of trouble. Is He our main source of help and refuge in time of trouble?

There are two types of hope that will help us to get through trials:

Betach (Strong's #983, same word family as #985 Bitach, #982, batach). Betach, a place of refuge and safety, both in fact of security and feeling of trust and safety, boldly, without care, hope, secure. From primitive root 982, Batach to hie for refuge, fig. to trust, be confident, and secure, make to hope, make to trust, assurance. To attach oneself, to place confidence in, to feel safe and rely upon with the idea of firmness, solidity and sense of well-being, knowing the rug will not be pulled out from under you. There is a strong contrast with relying on another type of security versus the security found in God. Isa. 30:15

Psalms 37 provides us with excellent insight to know how to take our stand in hope in times of trials or testing. It warns us against "fretting" which means to "glow or grow warm, to blaze up in anger, to heat oneself in vexation, to be displeased, earnestly fret self, grieve, be (wax) hot, be increased, kindle, wrath.

⁸ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*

This is the word used in Genesis 4:5-7 to describe Cain's attitude toward Abel. God told him to lift his countenance (face) back toward God. Ps. 34 describes the attitude of heart we need to stand in trials:

- Trust is the perfect confidence that He will manage us and everything concerning us exactly right and to know we can leave it all in His hands.
- Trust in the Lord for He supplies all of our needs.
- Delight in the Lord for He fulfills all of our desires
- Commit unto Jehovah for He accomplishes all things
- Rest in Jehovah for He looks after the saints
- Wait upon Jehovah for He bestows all blessings
- Look at Jehovah for He rewards all waiters
- Trust Jehovah for faith sees all grace.

Yachal: (Strong's #3176) To wait, tarry, be patient, cause to make or have hope. Rachal hope requires strength and endurance to continue to believe in God and His character in times of grief, despair or pain. It is the hope that does not let go of God when He seems to have gone away and forsaken us. It is the hope that waits expectantly for God's deliverance with a patience borne out of confidence in God's faithfulness, character and promises. It is a hope for the future (Jer. 29:11). God's plans stand forever. He understands all of our works and His eye is on those who hope for His lovingkindness and these He will deliver. Ps. 42:11

13. Know that all trials are only temporary. God always has a beginning and ending point for each trial or test. Look beyond the trial and know that God will bring you through this test. Focus on the glorious reward at the end in the same way as a runner maintains their focus on the finish line of a race. Job understood this and declared, "...He knows the way that I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10; Ps. 23:4; Ps. 30; John 11:40; 1 Peter 5:10; Jer. 31:10-14; Heb. 10:3-5; Luke 22:53; Ps. 37:9; Ps. 34:19; Ps. 46

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TESTS OF THE BELIEVER?

The Test	Scripture References	Notes	Our Response
Will we love Him with all of our heart despite our circumstances?	Ex. 20:5; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; John 21:15-19	This is the primary test and it goes along with what Jesus described as the greatest commandment.	Deut.4:29,39; 10:12; 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30
Will we follow a false prophet or teacher, one who may do signs or wonders or will we love the LORD with all our heart & soul?	Deut. 13; Matt. 24:11; Mark 13:22; John 4:48; 2 Thes. 2:9-12	This passage describes the way in which we are to investigate this person and how we are to respond—even if they are a best friend or close relative! Jesus describes the false prophets who will arise in the last days with signs and wonders capable of deceiving even the elect.	
Will we continue to trust and wait on Him when we experience long delays or unanswered prayers?	Gen. 22	Abraham was 100 when the long-promised heir was born. Waiting times test our faith and we can only hold fast through perseverance.	
Will we continue to love and obey Him when He demands great sacrifice?	Gen. 22:1-2; Heb. 11:17-19; Matt. 10:27	He asks us to lay those we love upon the altar. God's test of Abraham called for more than the sacrifice of his beloved son. It meant laying all of the promises had made that through this child, Abraham was to father a great people.	Abraham passed the test by believing God's promises and through him, all the nations of the earth were blessed.
Will we love Him if He places us in prison or catches us in a net?	Joseph Ps. 105: 16-24; Ps. 66:10-12; John the Baptist: Matt. 11:2-6; disciples: Acts 16:25	These prisons may be literal or figurative. Joseph was refined during his time in prison, prepared for great responsibility. Note how the John the Baptist and the disciples responded to their time in prison.	
Will we respond according to His Word when He allows men to persecute and mistreat us?	Ps. 66:10-12	How do we handle it when the wicked persecute us, take advantage of us or treat us unfairly? Will we walk in forgiveness and love?	Do we bless those who curse us? We are to turn the other cheek and walk an extra mile?

Will we continue to serve Him when there are incredible responsibilities or burdens on our backs?	Ps. 66:10-12	Will we trust Him to carry our burdens or try to manage them on our own?	Cast all of our cares on Him, give Him all of our burdens.
Will we continue to put our faith in Him through loss of hopes or dreams?	Heb. 11:13; Prov. 13:12	This can include careers, marriages, plans, even gifts or callings that we thought were from God. Will we become disappointed in Him? Is our faith in the dream or the promise or is our faith in the LORD our God who holds everything in His hand?	Jer. 29:11-14; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6; Job 1:21
The Tests of the Wilderness			
Will we walk by faith in times when we do not see God's immediate blessing and victory?	Num. 13:27-32; 14:1-4	Israel was laid low in the wilderness because of unbelief. They did not unite their experiences with faith.	
Will we trust God for His protection when we walk through a difficult or dangerous path?	Deut. 8:2; 13:3	The flesh wants to turn to man or rely on their own strength. The Israelites often wanted to return to Egypt in times of need.	
Will we obey His instructions according to the Word?	Ex. 16:4; Deut. 8:20; Jud. 3:1-4	When God provided manna, He gave very specific instructions for its gathering and use to see if they would follow His Word. He is not just asking for obedience to the letter of the law, but from a heart that loves God and desires to obey Him.	Deut. 6:6; 26:16; Prov. 3:1
When the choice is set before us to follow the Lord or please the flesh, will we choose His way?	1 Kings 3:5; 2 Chron. 32:31; Ps. 7:9; 11:5; 17:3	Israelites were brought low through craving things they did not have. They chose to be guided by their bellies than follow the leading of the LORD.	
Will we find security or comfort Him alone or in the "old life" of the world?	Ex. 14:10-12	Egypt represented the world and the comfort and security of life before salvation.	
Will we grumble and become bitter when God does not immediately meet our needs?	Ex. 15:22-27; Ps. 81:7	Testing at Waters of Meribah: Bitter experiences Marah means bitterness.	Thanksgiving in all things, at all times. Trust the LORD, wait on Him and believe

			He will care for us as He has promised.
Will we will trust in His provision to meet us in times of deprivation?	Ex. 16:2-3; Ps. 119:103; Rev. 10:10; Matt. 4:1-4	Will we demonstrate a sense of entitlement or slave/victim mentality that feels we deserve to be treated better? Note that Israel did not pray, they complained. God wants us to grow more and more dependent upon Him.	Job 1:20-22
Will we be satisfied with God's provision of daily sustenance?	Ex. 16:11-13a; Num. 11:1; Lam. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:10; James 3:8	Israel failed to be content with God's provision of manna from heaven and complained and grumbled because they wanted meat. Their greed and gluttony caused them to fail this test.	Matt. 4:4; Ps. 131:2; Ps. 63:5; Phil. 4:7-11 (Amp)
In times of need will we grumble and make demands of the LORD?	Ex. 17:1-3	Israel did not learn that God would provide and allowed their hearts to become hard and demanding when their needs were not met immediately.	Isa. 55:1-3; John 4:10; 13b-14; Ps. 65:4
Will we respect and honor those God places in leadership over us, even in the face of leadership failure?	Num. 12:1; Ex. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Rom. 13:1-2	David was pursued and nearly killed by Saul repeatedly but David refused to lift his hand against God's anointed. Aaron and Miriam did not hesitate to criticize Moses, a righteous leader.	
When we are tempted by those in the world, will we keep God's ways or follow in the world's ways?	Jud. 2:21,22; Jud. 3:1	God allowed the nations around Israel to test them, to see if they would remain faithful to the LORD or walk in the ways of the nations	
Will we set our hearts to love the LORD with all of our hearts or will we fall into idolatry?	Ex. 31:1-4	Idols are anything that we love or elevate in our lives more than the LORD. Israel made a Golden Calf and worshipped it when God's presence was withdrawn for a time.	1 Pet. 5:8
How will we react if a person in authority over us is not walking with the Lord?	Ps. 105:15; Num. 12:9-10; 2 Kings 2:23-24;	David is an example of one who was placed in such a position and passed the test. He continued to respect Saul	James 4:11-12; Matt. 7:1-2; Jer. 15:19; Isa. 6

		and refused to lift his hand against him. Michal found barrenness of soul because she spoke against the Lord's anointed.	
If He leaves us alone for a time and the sense of His closeness is removed, we will remain steadfast and trust?	Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:31-32; 2 Kings 18:5-6; Israel (golden calf). Job 23:1-9	The temptation is to fall into condemnation or feelings of rejection; to return to the sins of the flesh/world.	2 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:6-8; Josh. 1:5; Ps. 37:25,28
Will we turn to Him in faith for answers when He places us in a situation that would be impossible in the natural realm?	John 6:5,6; 11:6	Jesus asked the disciples what to do in a situation that clearly called for His miraculous intervention to see if they had learned from His past demonstration of a miracle. This might be giants standing in the way of God's promises, or a need so great we cannot possibly meet it with our own resources.	
How will we handle afflictions. ⁹ and the stress of storm and shakings in our lives? He tests us with the seeming victory of evil over righteousness.	Isa. 48:10; Ps. 34:19; Ps. 50:15; Luke 6:48-49; Heb. 12:26-29	This is the pressure test. God shakes everything that can be shaken so only that which cannot be shaken will remain. We become unshakable as we build our lives upon the solid rock of Jesus, developing a firm root in Him.	James 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:10; Ps. 46:1-3; Ps. 62:2
Will we respond in love when God allows us to be rejected, misunderstood or judged by men?	Job	He tests us through times of rejection when we are excluded or lose the acceptance and approval of others. God uses people in our lives to test us. Job's friends clearly thought he was suffering because of his sin. Even his wife told him to curse God and die.	
Will we hold fast to our faith and love of the Lord when	Acts 16:23-24; Ps. 73:10; 80:5; 102:9;	It is human nature to believe that if we are doing	

⁹ Afflictions (Strong's #7451 'ra) commonly translated as "evil" but does not necessarily mean it comes from Satan. It refers to troubles, adversity, misfortune, calamity, distress, exceedingly great grief, physical or emotional harm, painfully unpleasant experiences.

He permits people to suffer in the pathway of duty?	Matt. 20:22; 26:39; John 18:11	everything right, God would not allow suffering.	
Are we willing to face persecution or even death for our faith?	Acts 9:23-25; 29; 14:5-7; 14:19, 20; Acts 20:19; Rev. 2:10-11		Jer. 20:11-13
Will we take the mark of the beast in order to buy and sell or will we trust our lives totally into God's hands?	Rev. 12:11; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 13, 14; Rev. 21:1-8	The last generation will be universally tested by the antichrist. He will be given power to war against the saints, to kill and conquer them. A mark will be issued, so no man can buy or sell anything without the mark. The devil, working through the antichrist, will deceive the whole world and this will be a time of great falling away.	Scripture clearly gives us a formula for victory in this time of testing. For the believer to refuse the mark of the beast will require great courage and faithfulness to the Lord.