

**JUDGES 2:20-23**  
**FAITH TESTED!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 2, as we continue our in-depth study of this book.

And yes, it is not a heartwarming book, but there are so many lessons we can learn from the book of Judges. We can learn from the mistakes that the children of Israel made, and, as we will see as we go through this book, they made many.

And I guess the fact of the matter is that we do the same. We make many mistakes in life and the Lord is helping us to grow as He tests our faith.

Now we need to understand that God does not tempt us, the Devil tempts us to sin. The Lord tests our faith and there is a big difference!

I believe that it is the same situation that the Lord and the Devil use, but one wants to give us life, to help us to grow, and the other wants to destroy us!

It is sad that so many today think that the God of the Old Testament is some mean, vindictive God and the God of the New Testament is loving and merciful.

Let me be clear on this, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament and our God is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Then why do we think that the God of the Old Testament, if I can put it that way, is mean, vindictive?

Because we look at what He is doing with the children of Israel and we see, or I should say we come to the conclusion that He is mean and vindictive.

That is the farthest thing from the truth.

Let me illustrate what is going on and why we think this way or why some think this way.

When your children were growing up and you had to discipline them, did you discipline them because you hated them?

Of course not. You disciplined them because you loved them and you were trying to protect them, you were teaching them right from wrong.

But, how did your children feel about the discipline you placed upon them?

They did not like it, they probably thought you were mean, and if they could understand it, they would say you were vindictive or vengeful towards them!

But, again, that is not true. You loved them and cared for them and that is why you disciplined them.

Now let's apply that to our God who is perfect, He is righteous, He is holy. What He does to the children of Israel is not because He hates them, but He loves them and is disciplining them to protect them, not to hurt them. And He does the same with us because we are children of God, adopted into the family of God through Jesus Christ!

And that is what we will see here in the verses we will be looking at in Judges chapter 2 this morning.

Keep in mind that Joshua and the elders, that generation who loved the Lord had died. And now we are told in Judges 2:10, **“When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.”**

And then we see the result of this next generation who did not know the Lord, what they did. We are told in Judges 2:11-13, **“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.”**

And, as we saw last time, the book of Judges shows us the cyclical pattern of sin.

As the children of are in rebellion against God, they are in sin and worshipping the gods of the pagan nations around them, the ones that they were to drive out but didn't, and we see God step in.

And after sin we see servitude or that they end up being taken captive by the enemy, they are in bondage. God allows this to draw them back to Him. And that is exactly what sin will do in our lives.

As time goes by, and sometimes they are in bondage or captivity for several years, they finally cry out to the Lord to deliver them or we see their supplication before the Lord!

And God responds by sending them a deliver, a judge to free them from the bondage they were in. And we can say that this is speaking of their salvation.

But as things go well, by the time the judge dies, the children of Israel are back into sin, back into rebellion against God as they are worshipping the god's of the Gentiles once again and thus, this pattern of *SIN*, *SERVITUDE*, *SUPPLICATION* and *SALVATION* begins all over again. That is the book of Judges!

This morning, in the verses we will be looking at here in Judges chapter 2, we are going to look at a study I have called, ***“Faith Tested!”*** And I have broken these verses down into three main points. They are as follows:

***THE ANGER OF THE LORD – JUDGES 2:20***

***THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN – JUDGES 2:21***

***THE TESTING OF FAITH – JUDGES 2:22-23***

And here is the reason we are going to look at these verses here in Judges. The most obvious is that this is part of God’s Word.

And I do understand that people don’t want to hear about trials or difficulties, they want to hear good things.

That is the problem. We think that the testing of our faith is some kind of punishment, but it is not. Yes, God can use these things to get us back on track if we have gone astray, but many times He is working in us, building up our faith in Him, so that He can work through us!

So the reason this is so important is because we are all going to go through difficult times, times of stress, and we may be going through them right now.

And we may be wondering, “What in the world is going on? I am a Christian, the Bible says God loves me, and now this! I don’t understand this at all!”

I pray that as we go through these verses, we would see how much God loves us and cares for us that He does not want to leave us where we are at, but He wants us to grow in our relationship with Him.

But some people look at difficulty as a lack of faith and that is the farthest thing from the truth and they put a guilt trip on you if you are poor, or if you are sick, or whatever.

This article is from Joel Osteen, and there is some truth in the article, but the dangerous part is what is said regarding our faith and what we should experience in this life. Listen to what he wrote in this article called, “You Can Live Your Best Life Now.” He wrote,

Living your best life now means being excited about the life God has given you. It means believing for more good things in the days ahead, while living in the moment and enjoying it to the hilt.

Too often, we get comfortable with where we are in life and use that as an excuse to remain in mediocrity. “My parents were poor,” we say with a pout. “Before them, my grandparents were poor. Nobody in my family has ever amounted to much, so I guess I won’t either.”

Don’t believe that lie. My dad came from the poorest of families. His parents were cotton farmers, and they lost everything in the Great Depression. My grandmother worked 14 to 15 hours a day washing people’s clothes, earning 10 cents an hour.

They were good people, but nobody in our family line had ever amounted to much, living instead under a curse of poverty and defeat. Then one day, at age 17, my dad committed his life to Christ, and God put a dream in his heart to preach.

Certainly, the odds were against him. But God is not limited by our environment, family background or present circumstances. God is limited only by our lack of faith.

- <http://bit.ly/34ssurS>

I wonder how much money you need to make to show that you have faith. And I guess, if you are poor, you don't work for a fortune 500 company, you must be lacking faith! I guess both Jesus and Paul, as well as many of the other men and women of faith in the Bible, did not have faith because they were not rich, they were not wealthy! Not at all.

That is foolishness and it is wrong.

Again, I want to show you how important these trials, the testing of our faith is. And keep in mind that God is not testing our faith to show Him where you are at. He is all-knowing and thus, this testing of our faith is to show us where we are at so we can grow in our relationship with Him!

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 2 beginning in verse 20 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we look at this topic, ***FAITH TESTED!***

## **JUDGES 2**

### **VERSE 20**

You read this and you think, "***Wow, the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel.***

***What did they do that made Him so angry?"***

We don't have to guess because the Lord tells us why He as so angry with the children of Israel. They transgressed or broke the covenant that He made with their fathers, they did not obey His voice, but they did what they wanted to do!

And we see this played out in Judges chapter 3. It is a clear example of their rebellion against God.

In Judges 3:5-8 we are told, **“Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.”**

The Lord warned them that they were to be a separate people and yet, they dwelt among the pagan nations.

Not only that, but they had their children marry these pagan people, the Canaanites and-so-on.

And we might think that this is a little strict, what is the big deal. But the big deal is this.

We are told that this union with these pagan nations caused them to serve their gods and that they ended up forgetting about the Lord their God. God warned them, they did not listen, they thought they knew better, but in the end, God was right. What an important lesson for us to learn!

And once again we see that **“... the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. . . .”**

Judges 3:8.

And it is interesting as you look back here in Judges 2:20, God speaks of Israel as **“this nation.”**

Why did God say to Israel, **“this nation”** instead of *“My nation”*?

Because they broke the covenant they made with God, and as God warned them, judgment came upon them.

God had made them a great nation. He worked many miracles in their lives. What He promised them He brought to pass. And we can spend many hours looking at all that God had done for them.

What's my point?

It is this. What god out there, little "g", can do anything? There are none. The idols are made of stone or wood or whatever. They can't speak. They can't see. They can't walk. They can't do anything.

And yet, the God of Israel is living, He is powerful, and He is working in their lives in amazing ways.

Thus, why would you turn from Him and worship that which is not real?

The answer is simple.

### ***THE FLESH!***

And what I mean by the flesh is that these false gods appealed to the flesh. There is the god of weather and good harvest and thus, why not worship these gods when your life depended upon them? Because they are not real.

The other aspect is that they appealed to the flesh in many other ways.

And what I mean by that is that these god's focused on sexual immorality, sexual activity, and thus, they appealed to the flesh.

What is interesting is that feeding the flesh seems to be satisfying at first. But in the end, you are never satisfied, and you want more and more and more, and it never ends.

But we can find true satisfaction in the Lord, He is all we need and yet they did not see it that way and they turned from the One they said they would worship and honor and follow!



Remember in Joshua chapter 23, as Joshua is giving his farewell address to the leaders in Israel, and he tells them, **“Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day. For the Lord has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you. Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations - these that remain among you - and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn”**

**against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.”**

Joshua 23:6-16.

Joshua reminds the leaders in Israel all that God has done for them and thus, they need to follow the Lord, they need to obey His Words to them. If they do, they will be blessed.

And then Joshua tells them what will happen if they don't obey the Lord, if they don't follow His Word. They will be cursed; they will be taken captive.

But this farewell address was not just for the leaders in Israel. Joshua wants the people to hear all that he has to say and thus, we see that in Joshua chapter 24. And we are told, **“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ So the people answered and said: ‘Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.”** Joshua 24:14-18.

It sounds great, they said that they will follow the Lord, but talk is cheap and when push came to shove, they went after the gods of the Canaanites instead of worshiping the true and living God.

How does this relate to us?

It is easy to allow the things of the world to come into our lives.

I know that you may not agree with that but look at how much the world has influenced the church. We have allowed all kinds of sin into the church and we don't even see it as a problem. We have allowed the world to influence us and tell us that the Bible is just a bunch of stories, but it is not the Words of God! And so much more.

Let me share this with you from Ray Stedman and the article is called, *The Christian and Worldliness*. He wrote,

What does Christian separation mean? Your effectiveness as a Christian hangs on your concept of what separation means. Perhaps most of our personal and church problems would be solved if we had a biblical concept of what it really is.

This question of separation has been a bone of contention among Christians for many, many years. Though I believe that the Scriptures are very clear on the matter, still I am sure that we will not solve all the problems in this article. But we do want to take a good look at the subject.

You won't read very far in the New Testament without becoming aware of some very pointed warnings to Christians concerning their danger from the world around them. Second Corinthians 6:14 is a very well known passage. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

These words, "come out from among them, and be ye separate" have been nailed to the masthead of many denominations and church groups as the supremely important idea that Christians should heed in these days.

Then we have that very strong passage in I John 2:15-17, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

James comes out with probably the strongest word of all along this line for he says very flatly and plainly, “. . . know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God.” . . .

Now again I am not trying to make lists of taboos, please don't misunderstand me. I am simply trying to characterize the thinking of many who react to Christian isolationism. They adopt the world's standards and the world's values in the hope of being some influence to the world for Christ.

The result of that is always tragic. When we become like the world, we lose all our power to influence the world.

I remember reading of a boy who had a cage full of sparrows, and he thought it would be nice to teach the sparrows to sing like canaries. So he bought a canary and put it in the cage with the sparrows. After a couple of weeks, he came running to his mother and said, “Mother! The sparrows are not singing like the canary. The canary is now chirping like the sparrows!” That is the inevitable outcome of becoming like the world in order to reach the world.

If you want to see the folly of a life like that, go out and stand by the shores of the Dead Sea and look at the cheerless, dreary, lifeless waste. Then go read the story of Lot who moved into Sodom in order to win it and influence it by his life, and see what he lost as a result. That dreary desolation stands as a mark of the folly of moving in to be like the world.

Well, then, what is the answer? How do we reach the world and still not be like it? The answer is, we must learn to live on a frontier between these two extremes. We must learn to be in the world, but not of it. . . .

We must not think like the world. Our attitude is to be different our values must be different. Yet we are to be with them. . . .

The Lord wants us to live on a frontier where we are constantly under subtle attack, yet He knows we will be safe among the wolves and we become the instruments by which some of the wolves become sheep like ourselves.

“But”, you say, “isn’t this difficult? Doesn’t it present a lot of problems? Aren’t you constantly having to make adjustments and make decisions, and wouldn’t it be so much simpler just to avoid the whole matter?”

Of course it would. But where did we get the idea that we are here to avoid difficulty. Jesus said, “I am come to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!”

Whoever said the Christian life was to be easy? That is the whole trouble with it. We have made it so easy that we have few problems any longer, and so we have no power.

Our Lord wants us to have problems. He wants us to be constantly wondering what to do about a particular situation and to think it through, and test solutions according to the Word, and pray our way to an answer that satisfies and works. He likes us to live that way. That is what makes life challenging and interesting. Any other approach becomes boring and meaningless. Let me share with you a brief paragraph from a letter that came recently from a woman in Southern California.

She says:

*My husband is getting rather fed up with church. He is from a very strong Christian family, and was a strong Christian himself. But now he says to get ahead in the world, and make the kind of money he wants to make, you can't be a full-time Christian, because you either give up all you've got to follow Christ's claims, or you're not worthy. Since he's not worthy, why go half-way? I can't make him see otherwise.*

This is a common tragedy. Here is a modern prodigal son who has chosen to go out from the father's house, seeking the things he wants, and he doesn't realize that what he really wants is to be found only in the Father's house. And he's going to have to learn by going down into the pig-pen, or by drinking of the empty, unsatisfying cisterns of this world, how barren and meager such living is. . . .

Let me bring you another quote from another source, that says it much better than I. The author writes very penetratingly about the problem of the Christian and the world.

He says:

*To sum up, the Christian's vocation is to be in the world, but not of it; to represent Christ in it and to intercede on its behalf because it is under judgment (this is the Christian's priesthood), to identify himself with its sufferings but not with its attitudes, to bring his influence to bear upon the world's life without being corrupted by the world's ways; to stand on the frontier, holding forth the Word of Life, and so to love and obey that Word that he has been delivered from the evil one and sanctified in the truth. Such a calling involves a cross.*

*The man who separates himself from the world and seeks to escape it does not know the cross. The man who submits to the world's pressures and loses his distinctiveness as a Christian does not know that cross. The man who seeks to be in the world, as our Lord was in it, but shows that he is not of it because he is a Christian and in Christ; that man will find his cross. It's only the disciple who follows Christ in both these respects who has a cross to take up.*

Now, let me say, if this sounds hard and harsh and unappealing, it is because you do not have your own values straight. Let's be honest now. Is God right, and is the Bible right when it says this world is passing away and is really very unimportant? Is it really peanuts to us, this world in which we live? If so, than it's the easiest thing in the world to live a Christian life. But if this world's things mean much to us, it's a hard and grueling thing to be a Christian.

- <http://bit.ly/2JQ5cV3>

That is perfect. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are to be in the world, but the world is not to be in us.

Why was the Lord angry with Israel? Because they let the world into their lives and in doing so it pushed the Lord out!

Which brings us to our next point – ***THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN!***

### VERSE 21

Now this is interesting to me because it says that the Lord drove out the enemy. But I thought the children of Israel was doing battle with the enemy, so how can that be that the Lord drove out the enemy?

Because the children of Israel had to walk by faith, and it was the Lord who gave them these victories.

But now that sin was in the camp, you might say, since they refused to listen to the Lord, they were on their own, and because of that, they would eventually be taken into captivity!

Sin has consequences and bondage and captivity is the result of sin. And if you doubt that at all, then just read through the book of Judges because we see that played out over and over and over again!

Let me illustrate this like this.

While staying with my friends Tim and Jill Jones, I watched their hamster, Hammy, in his little cage. Hammy has a warm nest of cedar shavings to curl up in, a water bottle to drink from, and best of all, a wheel he can run inside of. He has everything a hamster could want or need.

But Hammy refuses to run inside his running wheel. Instead, he has come up with what he thinks is a better idea. Hammy climbs up on top of the wheel, turns over on his back on the top of the wheel, and stretches out. Gradually the wheel starts to turn, and Hammy's entire body rolls with it, headfirst. The wheel picks up speed and spins faster and faster until clunk! Hammy's head smacks on the bottom of the cage. Hammy gets up, shakes himself, apparently hurt from the unexpected sharp blow on his head.

But what does Hammy do? He climbs back up on top of the wheel, turns over, stretches himself out, and gets ready to clunk his head again. Why? Why would a hamster who has everything he needs disregard the wheel's proper use and do something that only hurts himself? And why, even after that, would he do it again?



The bigger question is, why do humans, who are supposedly smarter than hamsters, sometimes do the same thing?

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Again, as we go through the book of Judges that is exactly what we will see. Israel is on the top, they are being blessed, and the wheel turns as they go back into sin, and they smack their head, bondage as the enemy takes them captive, and then they get up, dust themselves off, repent and go back to the top of the wheel and the process begins all over again.

Now, before we are to quick to wonder how they can be so foolish, we do the same thing. God warns us, we don't listen, we smack our head you might say and come to our senses for a time. Get back up and repent and then we climb back to the top of the wheel until it turns, or we turn towards sin and smack, on our head again!

And for us, the consequences of sin can be physical, they can be spiritual, they can be emotional, or they can be all three.

If you find yourself in that position, you need to repent and get right with God and then walk accordingly, don't get back up on that wheel!

Let me share this with you, six points regarding what sin will do in our lives. We are told, ***1. Sin deprives us of spiritual strength and comfort.*** "Every unmortified sin will do two things: it will weaken the soul and deprive it of its vigor. It will darken the soul and deprive it of its comfort and peace."

**2. *Sin weakens the soul and deprives it of its strength.*** “An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit and all the vigor of the soul, and weaken it for all duties.” When he speaks of duties, he speaks of the ordinary means of grace, and particularly reading Scripture, praying and gaining the spiritual benefit that comes from doing these things.

**3. *Sin becomes the delight of the heart.*** “It diverts the heart from the spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God; it lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, so expelling the love of the Father.” Unmortified sin becomes our delight, and we come to love it and rejoice in it.

**4. *Sin becomes the meditation of our minds.*** “Thoughts are the great purveyors [sellers] of the soul to bring in provision to satisfy its affections; and if sin remain unmortified in the heart, they must ever and anon [soon] be making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” When sin goes untouched, it becomes the meditation of our heart, taking the place that should be filled with the Lord.

**5. *Sin hinders our spiritual walk.*** “The ambitious man much be studying, and the worldling must be working or contriving, and the sensual, vain person providing himself for vanity, when they should be engaged in the worship of God.” Sin steals the time, attention and affection that we need to maintain our communion with God.

**6. *Sin darkens the soul.*** “It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God’s love and favor. It takes away all sense of the privilege of our adoption; and if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them.” When we continually choose sin over godliness, sin destroys the comfort that the Holy Spirit seeks to provide. Our souls become darkened to his goodness and to the privileges of our adoption.

The solution to all of this is to put sin to death. Here is how Owen says it: “Mortification prunes all the graces of God and makes room for them in our hearts to grow. The life and vigor of our spiritual lives consists in the vigor and flourishing of the plants of grace in our hearts.”

- <http://bit.ly/36wOjIH>

So we have looked at ***THE ANGER OF THE LORD*** because of the sin of Israel, because they went after false gods and neglected the true and living God who loves them so much and has shown His love to them many, many times!

Then we looked at ***THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN*** and we saw that sin will be dealt with by God, not because He hates us but because He loves us. Our sin will find us out and like King David, if we don’t repent, it will affect us physically, spiritually and even emotionally!

The last point I want to look at is why does God allow these things in our life? And the answer is our last point, ***THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH!***

#### VERSES 22-23

Isn’t that interesting. God said that He was going to leave the enemy in the land to test the faith of the children of Israel!

In knowing that, let me ask you this question.

If the children of Israel were walking with the Lord, if they were obeying the Lord, do you think that the Lord would have driven out the enemy from them?

I think so. That was what God told Joshua in Joshua chapter 1.

Then why didn't He do it?

Because they did not obey the Lord, they refused to walk in His ways and the Lord was going to use this to test their faith.

And again, it was not for the Lord to find out where they stood, He knows all. He knows what we will do before we do it.

That tells me that this testing of their faith was not for God, but it was for them to see where they were at.

If they were following the Lord, great, the testing of their faith would show that.

If they were not following the Lord, then they would see that with their testing of their faith with the hopes that they would return to the Lord! I hope that makes sense to you.

Now let's look at our own lives today. Does God still test our faith?

You bet He does.

Why does God test our faith?

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean.

We are told,

When we ask why God tests us or allows us to be tested, we are admitting that testing does indeed come from Him. When God tests His children, He does a valuable thing. David sought God's testing, asking Him to examine his heart and mind and see that they were true to Him (Psalm 25:2; 139:23). When Abram was tested by God in the matter of sacrificing Isaac, Abram obeyed (Hebrews 11:17-19) and showed to all the world that he is the father of faith (Romans 4:16).

In both the Old and New Testaments, the words translated "test" mean "to prove by trial." Therefore, when God tests His children, His purpose is to prove that our faith is real. Not that God needs to prove it to Himself since He knows all things, but He is proving to us that our faith is real, that we are truly His children, and that no trial will overcome our faith. . . .

The testing or trials we undergo come in various ways. Becoming a Christian will often require us to move out of our comfort zones and into the unknown. Perseverance in testing results in spiritual maturity and completeness. This is why James wrote, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2). The testing of faith can come in small ways and daily irritations; they may also be severe afflictions (Isaiah 48:10) and attacks from Satan (Job 2:7). Whatever the source of the testing, it is to our benefit to undergo the trials that God allows.

The account of Job is a perfect example of God's allowing one of His saints to be tested by the devil. Job bore all his trials patiently and "did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing" (Job 1:22). However, the account of Job's testing is proof that Satan's ability to try us is limited by God's sovereign control. No demon can test or afflict us with beyond what God has ordained. All our trials work toward God's perfect purpose and our benefit.

There are many examples of the positive results of being tested. The psalmist likens our testing to being refined like silver (Psalm 66:10). Peter speaks of our faith as “of greater worth than gold,” and that’s why we “suffer grief in all kinds of trials” (1 Peter 1:6-7). In testing our faith, God causes us to grow into strong disciples who truly live by faith and not by what we see (2 Corinthians 5:7).

When we experience the storms of life, we should be like the tree that digs its roots ever more deeply for a greater grip in the earth. We must “dig our roots” more deeply into God’s Word and cling to His promises so we can weather whatever storms come against us.

Most comforting of all, we know that God will never allow us to be tested beyond what we are able to handle by His power. His grace is sufficient for us, and His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). “That is why,” Paul said, “for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

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I think that is important for us to understand. God is not testing our faith so we will fail. He is testing our faith so that even if we do fail, we will be able to come to Him and be strengthened by Him and grow in our walk with Him.

Think about going to the doctor. If there is a problem, you want to know about it. You don’t want the doctor to say that you are doing great when there is something wrong. So to check how you are doing, he will run some **TESTS** on you and then he will tell you the results.

The same is true with our Lord. In a sense, He runs some tests upon us, and He shows us what we need to change, He shows us how we are doing!

Look at I Peter 1:6-7 and listen to what Peter has to say about these testing's that come upon our lives. He wrote, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

I don't know about you, but I am a little embarrassed by this one because I can honestly say, I am not always ***GREATLY REJOICING*** at the various trials that have come upon me.

Yes, I can look back and see what God is doing, but that is not really faith.

True faith ***GREATLY REJOICES*** in the midst of the trial because you know that God is working, and He is testing your faith and helping you to grow in Him!

It would be great not to have any problems at all. That I wake up and you know, Mr. Bluebird is singing on my shoulder! But if that was the case, I would not need God and how strong would my faith be.

I think that is the problem many times when we have so much, we don't look to God.

Now, instead of Mr. Bluebird singing on my shoulder when I get up, Mr. Bluebird leaves a deposit on my shoulder to start my day!

But instead of getting angry, upset about what is going on, see what God is going to do, see what He is going to show you through all of this. It should be exciting to be in that situation, and we all are, every day. Yes, some days are worse than others, but God tests our faith every day and thus, allow that garbage to be purged out so that the gold that remains will become purer!

Paul, in Romans 5:3-5 speaks of the testing of our faith as he wrote, **“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

The word that Paul uses for **“tribulation”** THLIPSIS, (thlip’-sis) in the Greek, is not speaking of someone making fun of you but it speaks of being under pressure, like the squeezing of olives in the olive press or to press down upon a grape to produce grape juice!

Paul lived that kind of life, one filled with many tribulations as he served the Lord and yet he was able to say, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”** II Corinthians 4:16-18.

You see, these things are going to happen. The important issue is how are we going to respond to these things, these tribulations, these pressures? Are we going to let them make us strong or sour? Are we going to let them make us bold or bitter?

It is out of this tribulation then, that God is producing **“perseverance”** or **“patience”** in our lives. It is the Greek word HUPOMONE (hoop-om-on-ay’) that speaks of cheerful endurance, consistency. This word also means to “live under something.”

And thus, the idea would be that as we go through these difficult times that we don’t try to wiggle our way out, but we stay right in the middle and learn what God is showing us, that we can persevere through these times.



You see, as tribulation produces perseverance in our lives, that perseverance is building in us character, experience, we are maturing. The Greek word for “**character**” is DOKIME and it has its roots in the word DOKIMOS and it means that something is “tested” or it is “approved.”

It was a term that was used as precious metals were tested for their purity in the fire, such as silver or gold. The heat causes the impurities to rise to the surface and they are then removed to make the metals pure and the Lord uses the heat, the pressure of tribulations to cleanse us of our impurities.

Here’s the thing. When we as Christians experience tribulations that demand perseverance, that perseverance will then produce in us a proven spiritual character!

And this leads to “**hope**” and this is so important for any person, and it is important for us as Christians!

You see, without hope we would just give up. Think about it. If we were to hope for something but then later find out that we were never going to get it, our hope would be put to shame or disappointed.

Now here is the wonderful news. The hope of our salvation will never be put to shame. Why is that? Because it is based in God. He saved us by His grace that He has extended to us and no one can take our salvation out of His hands. We have that assurance!

What does that have to do with the testing of our faith?

I think it has everything to do with the testing of our faith.

Let me explain it like this.

If the testing of my faith had as the end result my salvation or that my salvation was based upon me passing this test, well, I don’t have much hope in passing!

Why is that?

Because, I don't know about you, but I blow it, I fall short, I don't always do what I want to do and sometimes I do what I don't want to do! (Romans 7:15-19)

But my hope is based in the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary and thus, I know that this testing of my faith is not for my salvation, but it identifies me with Christ and it shows me how I am doing, what I need to change in my life, it helps me to mature in the faith!

And the consequences for our disobedience to the Lord is not punitive but corrective in nature for us as Christians. The reason for that is that Jesus already paid in full the penalty for our sins and thus, He can't punish us for something that has already been paid for. But we can suffer the consequences for our actions and, again, this is corrective in nature as the Lord is trying to get us back on track!

Turn to Psalm 106, and we are going to begin reading in verse 34. You see, this Psalm is a poetic paraphrase of this chapter. We are told, **“They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, And played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, And those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, And they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times He delivered them; But they rebelled in their counsel, And were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, When He heard their cry; And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.”** Psalm 106:34-45.

The key here is don't turn from the Lord, the One who loves you. As it has been said, “To those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it.” May we learn the lesson!

Let me close with this. We are told,

Dr. Thomas Lambie, for many years a medical missionary in Abyssinia, said that while he was in Africa, he learned something very significant from the natives. They often had to cross bridgeless streams, a difficult procedure because of the danger of being swept off their feet and carried downstream to great depths or hurled to death against the hidden rocks.

Dr. Lambie learned from the natives the best way to make such a hazardous crossing. The man about to cross found a large stone, the heavier the better, lifted it to his shoulder, and carried it across the stream as ballast. The extra weight of the stone kept his feet solidly on the bed of the stream so that he could cross safely without being swept away.

Thus, the spiritual man regards the heavy stones, the burdens he has to carry in life, not as curses as the natural man would tend to interpret them, but as steadying influences, as God's provisions enabling him to cross safely to the realm beyond.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

As James says, and I will close with this, "**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**"

James 1:2-4.