

(Job 23:8-14 NKJV) ““Look, I go forward, but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; {9} When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. {10} But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. {11} My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. {12} I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. {13} But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. {14} For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such things are with Him.”

See Psalm 139
(A Psalm of David)

Two Indisputable Facts in Life

- 1. We cannot always clearly see what God is doing.**
- 2. He can always see perfectly what we are doing.**

These indisputable truths may shake you up... or they may give you the assurance you need for whatever you find yourself in.

If we could always see what God is doing...

- There would be no need for faith.
- There would be no need to test us.

Faith and the trials and tests we all go through are indisputably locked together.

What does faith demand of us?

Regardless of how it is defined, faith always demands the same response: We must believe, act according to our beliefs, and trust God for the outcome.¹

What is a test?

A test is the context or arena in which God prepares and processes you for change. It is a situation which demands a response from your faith. It is a trial of your reactions, whatever they may be.

What is the objective of a test?

God has an objective (point or aim) for every test. The objective is twofold:

¹ A saying I have heard from Dr. Charles Stanley on television and read from Pastor Joseph M. Stowell, Pastor of Moody Church, in his book, Shepherding the Church, Moody Press, Chicago, © 1994, P.136.

- First, it is a test of how you react.
- Second, it is a test of what you become through your reaction.

God's objective for our tests is well illustrated by the words of Smith Wigglesworth:

“Only melted gold is minted.”

(Again, Job 23:10 NKJV) “But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Every test has the same inherent challenge: Will we believe God, then act accordingly and trust Him for the outcomes of that particular time of testing?

Biblical Answer to the Question of why God Allows us to be Tested

(Romans 8:28-29 NKJV) “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. {29} For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Christian life is inherently a continuous, never-ending walk of faith through one test after another. Every test has as its express purpose, that it allows us the opportunity to become progressively more like Christ. God may not initiate the test, but He does allow it. He does so that we may fulfill Romans 8:29. Additionally, He is sovereign and is not subject to questions that challenge His authority. The most popular of these is “Why?” Therefore, do not try to hold God accountable to answer a “why?” question, beyond Romans 8:28-29. It provides the answer that never fails His character or purposes.

I cannot always see what God is doing, but if I am honest with myself, I will see and know exactly what I am doing! **I actually judge my own test.**

I actually become the judge of my own test.

God does not need to watch me to know my reactions to the test. He already knows my every thought. He knows the future and does not need to guess what I will do. **What He wants is for me to watch my own reactions in the midst of my test!**

He wants me to hold myself to a standard, the same standard Job declared he would hold himself to.

(Again, Job 23:11, 12 NKJV) “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. {12} I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

What God wants us to discover in the midst of our tests is an immovable, unwavering expectation that He will perform His Word over our lives: *(Again, Job 23:14 NKJV) “For He performs what is appointed for me.”*

Personal Testimony of Dr. Abramson

In 1996, we were invited to go to the Fiji Islands, in the South Pacific to begin a Ministry Training School and to pastor an International Church in the capital city. We applied for our work permit and packed up our belongings. We had reservations to leave America in late December. A couple days before we were to get on the airplane, we found out our Fijian work permit was denied. The paperwork was in order and we had done everything correctly. Nevertheless, it was denied. We began the appeal process and nothing seemed to be happening. We waited through January, February and into March. Well, something was happening – inside of us! We never wavered for an instant in the belief that we were going. We got on an airplane and went as tourists! We found a place to live and began to do what God called us there to do. We believed God, behaved accordingly and trusted Him for the outcome. With only a few days left on our tourist visas, things suddenly changed. We received our work permit and permanent visas. God is never too late and seldom early. He is, however, faithful!

When my wife, Nancy and completed our time in Fiji, we arrived back in the United States and proceeded to New York City to plant a church in Manhattan. God miraculously worked it out so we could lease a new Ford Explorer. When the time came for the lease to expire, we tried to figure out what to do next. We knew we did not want to lease another vehicle and quickly found out it was beyond our present means to buy one. We determined we would turn the Explorer back to the dealer and simply trust God for the outcome.

What we did not know is that for three months, God had been preparing a vehicle for us. You see, three months earlier, God had spoken to one of my dearest friends, who had been the owner of an automotive repair shop. In obedience to God, he had acquired a beautiful 1985 Lincoln Continental and completely renovated it. One week before we were to turn in our Explorer, he presented us with the vehicle, completely and thoroughly overhauled and ready

to roll! Oh, by the way, he also included his personal bumper-to-bumper warranty with it. He said, *“If anything goes wrong, call me and I will fix it for free – as long as you own the car.”*

We knew that God is faithful. We resisted making a decision about our transportation that would have left God out of the loop. At times, we were a bit nervous about our need for a vehicle, but we held onto our faith. We trusted that God had something for us, and would not leave us without the provision He had promised us in His Word!

In all of my trials, I have found that God is my biggest fan. He is my biggest cheerleader. In every test, He asks the same question: Will we hold fast to Him in the test, just as much as He holds fast to us?

Point 1.

**The test is not what you are going through,
but “who and what will you hold fast to?”**

A number of years ago, my wife Nancy preached her first sermon. Here is the title of that sermon, which has proven itself to us time and again.

**“Peace is not the absence of problems.
Peace is the presence of God.”**

(Hold fast to God – You hold fast to peace.)

A Path to Ponder

(Proverbs 4:20-27 NKJV) “My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. {21} Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; {22} For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. {23} Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. {24} Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. {25} Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. {26} Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. {27} Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”

Point 2.

**The test is not about what you are going through,
but “what will you listen to?”**

Whose words do you give your attention to?

*(Again, Proverbs 4:20 NKJV) “My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.”*

In 1999, we were in New York City, pastoring two churches. I went to the doctor for a routine check up, and after a series of tests, I received some bad news. Now, I am not going into the details of the tests, because I will not give the devil any glory for what he tried to do to me. However, when the test results were in, the doctor told me I was seriously ill and said this, **“It is like a run away freight train going down hill and you it very likely could kill you.”**

*** I said to myself, “I do not think so!” ***

You see, I heard the doctor’s voice, but at the same time, I chose not to hear, or accept the doctor’s words about the expected outcome. He was well meaning, but I was not going to let those death-dealing words have any place in me!

Sometimes, we have to let well-meaning people talk to somebody else.

I know who to listen to, and who not to listen to. In that doctor’s office, here is what I heard:

1. I heard Moses tell me that every sickness and disease is a curse of the law. (Deuteronomy 28)
2. I heard the Apostle Paul tell me that Christ has redeemed me from every curse of the law, so that the blessings of Abraham might come upon me, and that I might receive the promise of the Spirit! (Galatians 3:13)
3. I heard the Apostle Peter tell me that I have “great and precious promises,” among them that I have been healed by the stripes of Jesus. He wrote that when my faith is tested, if I continue to believe, I would receive what I believe for.

(1 Peter 1:6-9 NKJV) “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, {7} 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, {8} whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing,

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you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, {9} receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls.”

(Mark 11:23-24 NKJV) “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. {24} “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Point 3.

God never designed a test to burn you up, or burn you out. It is designed to burn something out of you.

Warren Wiersbe noted that when God permits his children to go through the furnace, he keeps his eye on the clock and his hand on the thermostat.²

Point 4.

What will become of you depends on what you allow to travel from your ears to your heart.

You choose what words are acceptable to you. You may not be able to choose what others say, but you can choose what you will hear! When I received the doctor’s report, I accepted the truth of my situation, but I chose, and still choose not to hear any death words spoken over me, or anyone close to me. I choose not to hear words that contradict the will of God for my life, or what God has promised me. Remember, there will be times when you have to let well-meaning people talk to somebody else.

You will always be asked to choose your priorities, while in the test. If you establish the wrong priorities for your journey through the test, you will regret the choices you made. Having the wrong priorities never gains the prize. Choose to listen to the Lord. When He speaks, He is going to speak life to you. He will be saying, *Embrace my words and you will embrace my priorities for your life.* “*You are going to make it. You can do it. You are looking good!*”

² Source unknown

What will you ponder?

(Again, Proverbs 4:26-27 NKJV) “Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. {27} Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”

To “ponder” about your circumstances, is to continually evaluate, dwell upon, and think deeply about your chances of success or failure in those circumstances. It is a test of your thinking! The more you ponder a particular path, the more attractive it will become to you... and the more likely you are to walk it... good or bad!

- You, alone, establish your ways (vs. 26).
- You will walk with what attracts you.
- You will embrace what attracts you.

Ponder the path of your feet. Watch where and how you walk! Take no exits, no detours, no wrong turns. It is a path already marked out and illuminated. God has provided the stepping-stones. The path is defined by God’s Word, and the voice of His Spirit within you.

Just go ahead. Put feet to your faith!



Point 5.

**The test is not what you are going through,
but “what it is you will ponder?”**

(Think about what you will think about!)

Will I hang tough? Will you be faithful? Will you persevere... all the way to the finish line?

What you see is what you will get!

We have learned that what we hear is what we get. There is another truth to think about, **“What you see is what you get.”** So here are critical questions. “What are you choosing to see? Where is your focus? What is in your sights? Where are you headed?”

When you are tested, do you see the circumstances, the temptations, the attack... or do you look into the light of Christ and see the unseen? Dr. Charles Stanley, Pastor of In Touch Ministries in Atlanta, gives a telling personal testimony about what to see in the midst of a test. I heard him tell the story on his television program, and quickly wrote a synopsis of what he said. Read it carefully and let the Holy Spirit speak to you, now and in the midst of your inevitable tests.

At the time, Dr. Stanley was a young pastor, going through a very unpleasant and difficult time. The church he pastored was divided. Some wanted him to remain as their pastor and others wanted him to resign. A very old woman, who was a member of the congregation, approached him after service and asked him to go to lunch. He accepted and during lunch, she asked him to come with her to her home. She had something she wanted to show him. He agreed, and after lunch, they went to her home. When they arrived, he was about to sit down, but she asked him to come over to the wall of her living room and look at a picture. As he did, he saw it was a painting of Daniel in the Lions' Den.

“What do you see?” She asked. “Tell me everything you see in the painting.”

As Pastor Stanley looked, he began to describe what he saw. “It is dark in the lions' den. There are many lions. Some are sleeping. Others have their eyes on Daniel. Some have their mouths open. Others have them closed. I also see bones on the ground at Daniel's feet. There are bones everywhere. There is a bright light in the image of a man in one part of the lions' den.”

“What else do you see?” asked the old woman.

“That is all I see.” Pastor Stanley replied.

“You missed the most important thing.” She said. “Look at Daniel's eyes. They are fixed on the light!”³

One of the most powerful, and certainly most instructive definitions of faith I have heard is my wife, Nancy's:

“Faith is looking into the light, and holding onto what you see, until the answer to your prayers comes to pass.”

³ Dr. Charles Stanley - In Touch Ministries, Atlanta, GA (His personal testimony, heard on his TV program, 6/24/07)

Remember the story about Daniel's three friends. They were thrown into the fiery furnace, which was heated to seven times its normal temperature. Listen to what the Scriptures record when King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace.

(Daniel 3:24-25 NKJV) "Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." {25} "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.""

If you focus on the unseen, an always-faithful God, with His always-faithful promises, you will find yourself walking in the center of His will, down the center of His path.

(Proverbs 4:18 NIV) "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day."

In Isaiah 57:15, it is recorded that Isaiah called God "the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity whose name is Holy." God inhabits the high ground of this universe to share with Him. He has given you this high ground to walk on and even a seat there to sit upon. It is placed there for you, next to him. Embrace the expectation that you are going to stand with Him and then take your seat! What is your expectation? You need high expectations for yourself. God has them for you.

(Jeremiah 1:12 NKJV) "I am ready to perform My Word."

People are like potatoes.⁴

When potatoes are harvested, they are spread out and sorted according to size – big, medium, and small. After they have been sorted, they are bagged and loaded onto trucks.

One farmer never bothered to sort his potatoes. Yet he was making more money from his potatoes than others who took their potatoes to the market. One of his puzzled competitors finally asked him, "What is your secret?" He said, "It's simple. I just load up my wagon with potatoes and take the roughest road into town. During the two-hour trip, the little potatoes always fall to the bottom. The medium potatoes land in the middle, and the big potatoes rise to the top."

That is not only true of potatoes. Life is like a wagon full of potatoes. The big potatoes rise to the top on rough roads, and

⁴ Source unknown

tough, persevering, Christ-committed people rise to the top in rough times. Tough times never last, but tough people do.

(James 1:2-4 NKJV) “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. {4} But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

“Only melted gold is minted.”⁵

Review

Point 1. The test is not what you are going through, but “who and what you will hold fast to?”

Point 2. The test is not what you are going through, but “what will you listen to?”

Point 3. God never designed a test to burn you up, or burn you out. It is designed to burn something out of you.

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Point 5. The test is not what you are going through, but “what it is you will ponder?”
(Think about what you will think about!)

Remember...

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⁵ From Page 2. Smith Wigglesworth