

Testings & Trials

Question: Why does God allow us to be tested, and where does Satan come into the process? How do I know when something is being allowed by God, or if it is just an attack from the devil?

Answer: First of all, let's establish some basic principles of God's word on the subject of testing and trials (also called tribulation):

- 1.) Satan is the Tempter and Deceiver – Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy.
- 2.) Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.
- 3.) God does not tempt us with evil – God disciplines us, refines us, and tests us as part of our growth process – it is for our good.
- 4.) Not all difficulties and tribulations in your life are either directly from God or Satan. It is possible to be suffering from your own mistakes and sins.

1.) Satan is the Tempter and Deceiver – He comes to steal, kill and destroy. Satan is the THIEF, he is a liar and a murderer, and his "works" are always things that STEAL, KILL and DESTROY something in your life. If you find that a certain set of circumstances is more damaging to your walk with the Lord, rather than causing you to RUN to Him and depend on Him more, then it may be just an attack from the enemy that you need to resist (James 4:7-8).

• **1 Thessalonians 3:5** "For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means **the tempter** had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain."

• **John 10:10** "The thief does not come except to **STEAL, and to KILL, and to DESTROY**. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it **MORE ABUNDANTLY**."

• **1 Cor. 11:3** "But I am afraid, lest **as the serpent deceived Eve** by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of Christ."

• **1 Timothy 4:1** "Now the Spirit expressly says that in the last days some will depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing SPIRITS** and doctrines of **DEMONS**; speaking **LIES**...."

• **John 8:44** "You are of your father, **the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was **a murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him....for **he is a liar**, and the father of lies."

2.) Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil – This is the purpose for which Jesus came to earth - He came to earth as a Man (was manifested) for the purpose of DESTROYING the works of the devil, and REDEEMING us and the whole earth from the CURSE of SIN.

• **John 3:8** "...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He might destroy the works of the devil**."

• **Romans 8:21-22** "Because the **CREATION itself** also will be **DELIVERED from the bondage of CORRUPTION** into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole CREATION groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."

• **Revelation 21:1-2 & 4-5** "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Verses 4-5) "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; **there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain**, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'"

3.) God does not tempt us with evil – God disciplines us, refines us, and tests us as part of our growth process – it is for our good. You cannot blame God for your falling into sin, because He does not put stumbling blocks in your way, to see if you will slip and fall. He does NOT deliberately lead us into evil situations (see Matt. 6:13), but He will USE an evil situation we have already gotten into for our GOOD. "Testing" means to qualify or prove by way of being put through certain conditions or procedures, **in order to determine the quality or character of something.** "Trial" means a tryout or experiment to test the quality, value or usefulness of something. Machines and automobiles are put through "stress tests" to see if they will hold up under extreme conditions. God may allow some of us to go through extreme afflictions or tribulations to determine if our faith is genuine. Sometimes, the testing is a refining process that is designed to purge out of us certain impurities and sins that are hindering our growth to Christ-likeness. In this refining process, the **"TESTING of our faith produces PATIENCE,"** and **"tribulation produces perseverance"**, which means it allows the character qualities of Christ to come to the surface, as the impurities are purged away. God's word says that our attitude while going through testings and trials should be JOY and REJOICING because God is perfecting us and making us like Christ.

•**James 1:13 & 17** "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot **be tempted by evil**, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." "Every **good gift** and every **perfect gift** is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

•**James 1:2-4** "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.""

•**John 16:33** "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world **you shall have tribulation** (troubles, afflictions): but be of good cheer; I have **OVERCOME** the world."

•**Romans 5:3-5** "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."

•**1 Peter 1:6-7** "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved (distressed) 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."

•**James 1:12** "**Blessed** is the man who **endures temptation (testings)**; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

•**1 Peter 4:13 & 19** "But **rejoice** to the extent that you partake (share) of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." "Therefore, let those who **suffer according to the will of God** commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

•**Malachi 3:2-3** "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For **He is like a refiner's fire**.....and He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and **He will purify** the sons of Levi and **refine them like gold and silver**, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness."

•**Isaiah 48:10** "Behold, **I have refined you**, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction."

•**Job 23:10** "But He knows the way I take; **when He has tried me**, I shall come forth as gold."

•**Hebrews 12:3-11** "For consider Him (Jesus) who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening (discipline) of the Lord, nor be discouraged **when you are rebuked by Him**; for **whom the Lord loves** He chastens, and scourges (whips) every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not

chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He [*chastens us*] for our profit (good), that we may be **partakers of His holiness**. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

•**Proverbs 17:3** "The refining pot is for silver and **the furnace for gold**, but **the Lord tests** the hearts."

4.) Not all difficulties and tribulations in your life are either directly from God or Satan. It is possible to be suffering from your own mistakes and sins. Be honest and examine yourself to see if some or maybe even MOST of your sufferings and so-called "attacks from the enemy" aren't really the consequences of your own mistakes, bad choices, and sins. Make sure that you are suffering because of **being a Christian**, and not because of your own obnoxious behavior, careless treatment of other people, or some other way in which you have disobeyed God.

•**I Peter 2:19-20 & 3:17** "For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, **suffering wrongfully**. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten **for your faults**, you take it patiently? But when **you do good and suffer for it**, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God." "For it is better, if it is **the will of God**, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

•**I Peter 4:15-17** "But let none of you SUFFER as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone **suffers as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

Let's look at what God's word says about times of testing or trials in the lives of Jesus, Joseph, Job, Peter, and Paul.

1.) Jesus - Jesus was the sinless Son of God - He was not being **tested by the devil** because of any sin in His life. There are times when we must go through some kind of testing or trials, but it is not necessarily because there is some sin God is purging out of our lives. Some testings are just to teach us obedience and to trust in our Lord no matter what. Even Jesus, God in the flesh, had to be "perfected" **through suffering in order to learn obedience**, because these were things He could not learn in the perfect environment of heaven (see Phil. 2:8).

•**Matthew 4:1-3** "Then Jesus was **led up by the Spirit** into the wilderness **to be tempted by the DEVIL**. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when **the TEMPTER came to Him**, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"

•**Luke 4:1 & 14** "Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness." "Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region."

•**Hebrews 5:8-9** "Though He was a Son, yet **He LEARNED OBEDIENCE** by the things which He suffered. And **having been PERFECTED**, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

•**Hebrews 2:10** "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation **PERFECT through sufferings**."

2.) Job - Read Job 1:1, 6-12 & 22; 2:3-10 to see how God allowed Satan to challenge Him over the integrity of one of His servants, Job. Satan had to ask permission, and God put limits on what he could and could not do. The test was **to PROVE** whether Job would remain faithful to God, no matter what happened to him.

•**Job 1:1, 8-12 & 22; 2:3** "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil." "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.' Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; **he will surely curse You to Your face.**' Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him (on his body).' So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord." (Verse 22) "Through all this Job did NOT sin **nor did he blame God.**" Job 2:3 "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.'"

3.) Joseph - Read Genesis 37:4-36; Gen. 39:7-20; Gen. 40:12-23 to see how people abused, mistreated and harmed Joseph in some way, but later in life, Joseph admitted that **God had been in control all the time**. Because God is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, and all-wise, we can TRUST HIM to know what He is doing when He ALLOWS certain things to happen in our lives.

•**Genesis 50:20** "But as for you, **you thought EVIL against me**, but God meant it for GOOD...."

•**Romans 8:28** "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."

4.) Peter - We have it right from the lips of Jesus Himself that Satan is allowed to ask for an opportunity to test us as Believers. This was the time when Peter denied Jesus three times, even cursing and swearing that he didn't know Jesus. Yes, Peter failed that individual test, but Jesus said He was praying for Peter, and that ultimately, Peter's faith would not fail, and Peter was later restored to full fellowship and leadership (John 21:15-19, Acts 2:14, 38, Acts 3:1-12).

•**Luke 22:31-32** "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, **Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat**. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.'"

5.) Paul - God allowed Paul to be afflicted by a "**messenger**" of Satan. The word messenger is the same word as ANGEL, which would make this a demon. It is possible that this demon followed Paul from city to city, inciting hatred in people and riots against him, and causing a lot of the persecution Paul endured (II Cor. 11:22-30). The term "thorn in the flesh" is an expression, like "pain in the neck." There is nothing in this scripture to indicate that Paul was sick with some kind of disease, which many traditions teach.

•**II Corinthians 12:7-10** "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was **given to me, a MESSENGER of SATAN** to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

So, does this mean that God uses Satan and evil things to test us and try us? Why doesn't He just teach us what He wants us to do in His word? Well, **God's word is certainly His first choice** for our training and growth (see II Tim. 3:16-17), but most of us are too STUBBORN, self-centered, and PRIDEFUL to listen and learn just from His word. In this sinful, fallen world, God ALLOWS trials and testings, even attacks from the enemy, if it will get our attention and drive us to our knees in prayer, and drive us to His word. When everything is going smoothly in our

lives, we many times feel we do not need God. He allows trials and testings to show us our need to depend on Him entirely. God may even USE Satan and the evil he causes, if in doing so it will cause us to be changed and conformed into the image of Christ. How Satan HATES that!

•**Romans 8:28-29** "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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to be conformed to the IMAGE of His Son.....**"

•**II Timothy 3:16-17** "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, **for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

•**Psalm 119:67, 71 & 75** "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now **I keep Your word.**" "It is **good** for me that **I have been afflicted**, that I may learn Your statutes." "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that **in faithfulness** You have afflicted me."

One example of how God used Satan in carrying out and fulfilling His plans was with Judas. God's master plan was for Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, so was Judas responsible for betraying Jesus? Yes, Judas was OPEN to allowing Satan to enter and possess him, because of pride and rebellion in his heart, and because he ACCEPTED Satan's suggestions. We as Christians cannot be POSSESSED by the devil or demons, but we can **open our lives to demonic influence if we entertain and accept wrong thoughts** and suggestions ("the fiery darts of the evil one" - Eph. 6:16). An example of this is in the Old Testament, in I Chronicles 21:1-8, where it says that "Satan MOVED David" to disobey God. In David's case, it was **his PRIDE that opened the door for Satan** to make his suggestion, and David took the bait.

•**John 13:2 & 27** "And supper being ended, **the DEVIL having already PUT IT INTO the HEART** of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him..." "Now after the piece of bread, **Satan entered him** (Judas). Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'"

•**Luke 22:3** "Then **Satan entered Judas**, surnamed Iscariot....."

Satan is called the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:3-4) and the "prince" or "ruler" of this world," so he is in control of this world system. The Greek word for "world" is "kosmos" which means the world system of things, **the whole system of thinking** among the UNSAVED people of the world. Satan is also called the "**prince of the power of the air (atmosphere).**" **All unsaved people** (children of disobedience) belong to **Satan** and are under his control, and are **motivated** and energized by Satan. •**Ephesians 2:1-**

2 "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course (system) of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit who **now works in** the sons (children) of disobedience."