

God Tests the Heart for our Good

Genesis 44:1-34

We need re-creation by Christ in order that the image of God, once distorted by sin, may be restored. We need deliverance from the dominion of sin in order that we may live freely for God. We need to be rescued from the power of Satan so that our lives may be given to Christ the Lord as his glad bondservants. We need to be saved from the wrath of God so that, released from this most terrifying of all prospects, we may live the life of forgiven sinners. It is the gospel of God that meets our need. It comes to us in our sin and begins to undo what had been wrongly done in our lives in order that God's image may be restored. Sinclair Ferguson

- I. From the time of Adam and Eve, every generation has had those who were sold out for Christ. The reason is because God tested their hearts and put them through the refiner's fire to make them into vessels for honorable use for the sake of the gospel. It's a serious undertaking that is not for the faint of heart. Paul wrote, *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."* 20 *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.* 21 *Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* What God was doing with Joseph's brothers, was taking them through the refiner's fire by testing their hearts and revealing to them that he would not settle for anything less than true repentance and the change of the heart that comes along with it. It is the heart that is tested and examined for our good so that we may better serve him as His bondservants who will serve Him throughout eternity.

Gen. 44:1-12

1 Thess. 2:4

Prov. 15:3

2 Chron. 16:9

Heb. 4:13

Prov. 4:23

Jer. 17:10

Prov. 17:3

1 Peter 1:6-7

Jer. 30:7

Mal. 3:2-4

Zech. 13:9

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. gotquestions.org

1 Peter 1:6-7 *6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

- II. *The Hebrew word translated as “test” in the Old Testament is bachan. It means to “examine, investigate, prove, scrutinize.” “Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart” (Proverbs 17:3, NLT). The Greek word translated as “test” in the New Testament is dokimazo. It means to “put to the test, prove, examine, and, by implication, to approve.” In 1 Thessalonians 2:4, it says, “On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts,” The same Greek word is used for both “approved” and “tests.” christianity.com*

δοκιμάζω dokimázō, to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals. To recognise as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy (Strong's Concordance)

יָבַח bâchan, baw-khan'; a primitive root; to test (especially metals); generally and figuratively, to investigate:—examine, prove, tempt, try (trial). (Strong's Concordance)

“At the end of [1Thess. 2:4] Paul uses the word ‘examines’ in the present tense to emphasize the ongoing evaluation of God. Stated plainly, God is always looking at your heart. There isn’t a moment when His eye is not on you (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3; Heb 4:13). Nothing should be more sobering for those entrusted with the gospel than to know that God sees everything.” Howell

2 Chron. 16:9 *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*

Heb. 4:13 *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

- III. As with all of whom God puts through the refining fire of faith, a choice must be made to either turn to God and submit to his act of grace toward their sanctification or shrink back to avoid the inconvenience of being refined by Him toward holiness (Heb. 10:37-38). In the case of Joseph's brothers, they did not shrink back, but instead responded with the realization that there was sin in their hearts toward God that needed to be made right. Granted, they had to face Joseph, but what came out of Judah's mouth was a sincere honest expression of grief and disregard for self over concern for the welfare of their father Israel. Perhaps, the first time in their lives, they realized what their sin had done to their father, and it broke them in ways that forever changed their character toward holiness. *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 Jn. 4:11-12).*

Gen. 44:13-34

Gen. 37:34-35

Ps. 32:3

Rom. 3:10-11

Gen. 37:26

“These men were all born again, and because they were born again they inevitably showed forth the character and love of their Savior.” Boice

Heb. 10:37-38 *For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”*