

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

The Purpose of Testing

In the previous letter in our series, *Preparing to Reign with Christ*, I made the following statement: “Our preparation for reigning with Christ will inevitably mean confrontation with spiritual forces which are at enmity with God and His eternal purposes.”

As citizens of the kingdom of God, Christians are automatically at war with the kingdom of Satan. The ensuing conflict in which you and I engage is one of the means God uses to bring us to maturity so we can rule and reign with Christ. The struggles and tests we face are a necessary part of our growth process.

How does God use testing in our lives? In this issue of *The Teaching Legacy of Derek Prince*, we will look to the Word of God for helpful answers to that question.

Why Testing Comes

“What is man . . . that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?” (Job 7:17-18)

That is an amazing revelation, isn't it? God visits

us every morning and tests us every moment. When this truth first became real to me, I had to ask myself: *Am I prepared to receive a visit from God every morning?* As a follow-up to that question, I naturally asked: *Why does God test us? What is His purpose?*

Collins English Dictionary gives an interesting definition of the verb test: *to ascertain the worth of a person . . . by subjection to certain examinations.* God does not test us because He is angry with us or wants to put us down. On the contrary, testing is a mark of God's favor. He tests us because He wants to establish our value. Why does a jeweler subject gold and silver to tests? He does it because they are valuable.

Job

In the world of the patriarchs there was one man of outstanding righteousness who faced enormous testing—Job. God was proud of Job, and actually boasted about him to Satan: “*Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?*” (Job 1:8).



Characteristically, Satan answered with an accusation, attributing selfish motives to Job: “He only serves You because of what He gets from You.”

In response, God permitted Satan to put Job to the test. First, He allowed the Adversary to destroy Job’s possessions, his servants, and his children. Then God even permitted Satan to afflict Job’s body with boils from head to toe. But He did not allow the devil to take Job’s life.

How did Job respond? He recognized that God was testing him. “*When He has tested me,*” he said, “*I shall come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10)—that is, gold which had been tested by fire. Job’s trust in God’s true character gave him the strength to endure. He cried out in agony of soul; but he never gave up.

Even when Job’s friends insisted his sufferings were due to sins he had committed, he remained steadfast. In the end, God fully vindicated Job and publicly rebuked his “friends,” saying, “*You have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has*” (Job 42:7).

Abraham

Abraham was another righteous man who endured severe testing—even the extreme requirement to offer up his own son. Like Job, Abraham was subjected to special tests because he had a special destiny—to become the father of God’s chosen people, both Jewish and Christian. God applies special tests to those for whom He has special purposes.

The New Testament clearly warns that as Christians, we will undergo testing. Peter compares our faith to gold, the genuineness of which must be “*tested by fire*” (1 Peter 1:7). James tells us that we should respond to testing with joy:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing

of your faith produces patience [endurance]. But let patience [endurance] have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)

(I wish I could say I always responded rightly to the tests I have endured. I did not always count them all joy!)

Later, the book of James offers Job as an example of how to respond to testing: “*You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful*” (James 5:11, NAS). Do you and I view testing as an opportunity to experience the Lord’s compassion and mercy?

Moses

Let’s look now at God’s testing of Moses. Moses was 80 years old when the Lord commissioned him to return to Egypt and deliver Israel from their slavery. Yet, when Moses was actually on his way back to Egypt, “*the Lord met him and sought to kill him*” (Exodus 4:24-26). Why? Because of Moses’ disobedience.

Moses had disobeyed the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:9-14). Only when he repented and had his son circumcised did the Lord spare Moses’ life and release him to go on his way. Moses’ position as a leader did not exempt him from God’s discipline—actually, it made him all the more accountable.

For you and me, there is a personal application of this passage, especially as we grow older. We cannot expect to complete our God-given assignment if we make room for disobedience in our lives. When we come under the dealings of God, we need to humble ourselves before Him and pray the prayer of David in Psalm 139:23–24 (NIV): “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if*

there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

If we allow the Lord to search our hearts and He does not find anything offensive, we may conclude that we are under God’s testing, not His chastening. If we are being chastened, our response should be to **repent**; if we are being tested, our response should be to **endure**.

How the Enemy Works

We can learn much from Satan’s original temptation of Adam and Eve. His Greek title *diabolos* (devil) means *slanderer*. To slander someone means to defame their character. Especially when we are being tested, we need to remember that this is Satan’s primary activity.

First and foremost, Satan defames the character of God Himself. Hence his question to Eve: “*Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’*” (Genesis 3:1). Satan implied that God was an arbitrary, unfair despot. He was withholding a “higher level” of knowledge from Adam and Eve, which would come to them if they tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Satan’s goal was to undermine their trust in God’s goodness, when in actual fact, God had already provided them with everything that was good, beautiful, and delightful. Adam and Eve moved from 1) mistrust of God’s goodness, to 2) disbelief in God’s word, and then to 3) the act of disobedience. There were three stages in their fall: **mistrust**, **disbelief**, and **disobedience**.

Through our faith in Christ, we step into a redemptive sequence that reverses this downward process. We replace disbelief with faith; disobedience with obedience; and mistrust with trust. The process is not complete until our faith has developed into trust.

Faith vs Trust

What is the difference between faith and trust? Here is a non-theological answer: faith is an **act**; trust is an **attitude**. Psalm 37:5 (NAS) puts it this way: “*Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.*”

Commit describes a single act of faith; *trust* describes a continuing attitude after you have made the commitment. To illustrate, imagine making a deposit in a savings bank. You hand your money to the teller and receive a receipt. That is *committing*. After that, you don’t lie awake at night wondering: *Is the bank really taking care of my money?* You just put the receipt in a drawer and sleep soundly. That is *trust*.

Many Christians take the first step, an act of faith. But then they struggle to maintain an attitude of trust. Strangely, many of us find it easier to trust an earthly bank than to trust our heavenly Father!

When enduring a test, it is important to remember that the primary purpose behind God’s tests is to produce trust in us. We see this with Job, when he said, in the midst of all his trials: “*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him*” (Job 13:15). Job’s trust enabled him to lift his eyes above the realm of time to catch a glimpse of eternity and the resurrection:

*For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God.
(Job 19:25-26)*

Keeping the End in Sight

Why is trust so important? Because it reveals our estimation of God’s character. When Adam and Eve

yielded to Satan's temptation, their action made this statement: "God is not dealing fairly with us. He can't be trusted."

The goal of our salvation from sin is to completely reverse the effects of the fall, restoring in us the quality of trust. As we go through the various tests of life, may we never lose sight of God's end purpose: to produce in us an **unshakable confidence** in God's absolute trustworthiness.

Jesus Himself is the supreme example of trust. In fulfillment of His Father's plan, He was handed over to cruel and godless men who mocked Him, spat on Him, flogged Him, stripped Him naked, and nailed Him to a cross. At His most intense moment of testing, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Yet in all this, His trust in His Father's faithfulness never failed. With His last breath, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46). His last act was to yield His spirit in trust to the Father.

God will not permit us to be tested beyond what we can bear. He may not expect of us what He required of Jesus—perhaps not even what He required of Job. Yet, every test we go through is designed to mold our eternal character—until we have become all that God created us to be in Christ.

Is that your desire? If so, let's express it together with the following prayer:

Lord, I know I have not always trusted You as I should, and for that, I ask Your forgiveness. I realize that the purpose of Your testing is to transform me into the person You created me to be. I want that, Lord—with all my heart.

In faith, I make this proclamation now from James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation [testing]; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life." I declare my trust in that truth about testing—and my ultimate trust in You, O Lord. Amen.



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This message is taken from the Derek Prince teaching series entitled *Preparing to Reign with Christ*. For further study, we are making the CD "Endurance" available to you at no charge. Just use the enclosed reply slip to request your copy.

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