

1 Thessalonians 2:4

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

Test, test, tests. When I was in school, I hated tests. Now that I am older, I still hate tests. But did you know that God tests us (*but God who tests our hearts*), not to show us what a failure we are, but to bring out the best in us. But sometimes we think that God is putting us through a test because we did something bad or wrong. But in school, we were never given tests because we were bad, but simply to show us (and the teacher) what we have learned and what we still need to learn, and doesn't God do the same things?

There may have been things you went through recently, that if it was 5 or 10 years ago, you would have failed miserably, but today you passed the test because you have grown in the Lord. But sometimes God tests us, not so He (The Great Teacher) can grade us or see how we are doing, but rather, so that "we" can see how "we" ourselves are doing, and where we have grown, and those areas that we still need to grow in.

I remember that when tests happened in school, some of those super smart kids got that big circled **100%** or **A** on their paper, where as some of us got that big red **F** on our paper, circled in red ink. But also with the tests, the teacher would not only grade the paper, but if we got something wrong, would write on the paper which questions we got incorrect and sometimes even include the answer. Once again, it was to help us to learn.

As Christians, when we are tested and fail a test, we shouldn't hang our head and sulk, but rather search God's word for the right answer, or the right way to live, according to His word. Then when the test happens again, we will pass with flying colors, because we have searched the scriptures for the right answer to the testing.

Now, we know that God "tests" us to bring out the best in us, but satan "tempts" us to bring out the worst in us. Even Jesus addresses both of these in this next verse.

† **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.*

Satan doesn't want us to succeed, but rather to fail and see our failures so that he can throw them in our face, and yell out to us what losers we are, and how God could not love a loser like us. *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.* But God wants us to succeed in life, and that is to live a godly life that is pleasing to Him and fruitful for us. *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

So, how do you know when you are being tested by God verses being tempted by satan? James gives us the answer when he said, *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.* James 1:13

God will not tempt you by trying to make you do something bad, but rather He will allow you to be tested to see if you will be obedient to Him and His word. Remember Abraham, and how God tested him with his son Isaac

† **Genesis 22:1-2** *Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

And we know that God was not testing Abraham to see if he would murder his son Isaac, but rather to see if Abraham would be obedient to Him and was willing to give his son Isaac up if God asked him to, which he was and passed the test. Also note that because Abraham passed the test, we also are blessed because of it.

† **Genesis 22:15-18** *Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-- blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

Also, if we fail when we are tested, we should not feel condemned, because the bible says that *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* Romans 8:1

When you are tested by God, and you fail, it should cause you to run to God and seek His forgiveness, not feel condemned and think you are going to hell (if you are saved) because of it. We should be spiritually minded, knowing the testing of our faith by God leads us to life in Jesus Christ, and that temptation is satan trying to lead us to eternal death.

† **Romans 8:6 (NLT2)** *So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.*

† **James 1:2-3** *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*