

# Testing and Trials

by Erlo Stegen

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*God tests and tries us to purify and strengthen our faith, to humble us, and to see what we are living for.*

**Duration:** 54:12

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 10:12, 2 Chronicles 32:31, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Testing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of giving all honor, praise, and glory to God. He encourages the listeners to have a heart filled with gratitude and thanks to God, even in times of testing and trials. The preacher shares a parable about a tortoise who wanted to migrate and hitched a ride with geese by holding onto a rope with his mouth. As people marveled at the sight of a flying tortoise, the tortoise took credit for the idea, highlighting the danger of becoming conceited. The sermon concludes with a reference to 2 Chronicles 32:31, where God tested Hezekiah by allowing envoys from Babylon to inquire about a miraculous sign, revealing what was in his heart.

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## Transcript

Our text is from 2 Chronicles chapter 32 and verse 31. Hezekiah succeeded in everything he undertook, but when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we ask you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you would speak to us from your Word.

Touch our hearts that no one may leave this place being untouched. Work, Lord, far above what we can ask or pray for. Here we read about Hezekiah, who started well but ended badly.

God was at work and God did something and He said, by this which I am doing, I want to see what is in the heart of Hezekiah. The rulers of Babylon sent their envoys to Hezekiah. They wanted to come and see for themselves and hear for themselves what God was busy doing there in the land.

But when they came, God left Hezekiah, for he wanted to know everything that was in his heart. Now, the history of Hezekiah is recorded in three places in the Bible. It's recorded here in the second book of Chronicles.

And also in Isaiah chapter 38. God tested Hezekiah. It's recorded three times and God wanted to know what is in Hezekiah's heart.

And God tested him three times. Firstly, by his being kept. He threatened Hezekiah and he sent him a letter to threaten him.

The king of Assyria and he said, God will not be able to spare you from my hand. And he said, God will not be able to rescue you and he besieged Jerusalem. And now, instead of Hezekiah just giving up and surrendering, he instead went to the prophet Isaiah and he said, here are my enemies.

They're attacking me. They've surrounded me. What can I do? But God sent his angel, his messenger, and he said, go and destroy the army of Assyria and 185,000 soldiers were killed.

And because the king had gone to Isaiah and cried to God for help, God intervened, God was merciful and God rescued him. His second test was that of his illness. After he had witnessed God's miraculous intervention and saving him and rescuing him from his enemies, from Assyria, he became ill.

And God sent the prophet Isaiah to him to announce to him and to say to him that this illness is unto death. When Hezekiah heard that, he cried, he wept tears and pleaded with God. And God saw his tears.

God heard his prayer. And then God said, you will no longer die. I will give you another 15 years to live.

His second test, and now the third and last test. And I want us to especially look at this third test of Hezekiah. And this third test was the test of Hezekiah's success, of being successful and being able to witness God's victory and destroying his enemies.

He was ill and to death before that. But God gave him years after that to live. He was a successful king and was very wealthy.

He had great riches and honor. And so these Babylonian envoys came to Hezekiah to visit him and to witness for themselves all the wonderful things that God did for Israel. Now I have this question, why did God leave Hezekiah at that time during that moment? Why did He say, I will leave him? And we find that in 2 Chronicles in verse 32.

But Hezekiah did not return the good things that God did for him. For his heart was proud. There was pride that had entered into his heart.

That we find in chapter 32 verse 25. But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him. So that is when we take that which is these blessings, all the things of the world, and we place it before God.

We place it above God. And then God forsakes that person and says, well, I leave it now over to Him. If we use our time as we want to use it.

According to the way that we want to, we will suffer. God is pure. God is too holy.

To meet and to have fellowship with such a heart. Now the visit of these Babylonian ambassadors to Hezekiah was to test him. How he would respond and how he would thank God for all these wonderful things that God had done for him.

And all God's grace in his life. All the miracles that God had performed for Israel. But Hezekiah did not use that opportunity right.

To testify to the power of God. And of the grace of God. And the mercy of God.

He would have brought great honor to God's name. But instead, Hezekiah took the honor upon himself. He became uplifted and he became haughty and puffed up.

And he put his honor before that of God. Now in Psalms it says, test me and know my heart, O Lord. And know my anxious thoughts.

And see, O Lord, if there is any offensive way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. And God would have been victorious in his testing.

And God would have put forth how pure and true his heart is. If you would uplift God's name before all the nations. And demonstrate to them that God is alive and that God is powerful.

But when God saw his pride and haughtiness. And saw how he uplifted himself and took the honor upon himself in front of these envoys. God said, alright, I leave you now.

All who says is when it's said. God tests us as well that it may become known what is in our hearts. Now that we are tested.

When God tests us and he tries us. It is for the purpose that we may be purified. And that our faith may be strengthened.

When some are tested and tried, they lose all strength. They say, oh, here it is again. No.

But when you've confessed that sin. And then you are tempted again to sin. by that God wants to strengthen you in your faith, that you may learn to resist it.

You don't understand. You don't understand that when you've confessed that sin, and you've repented from it, and then it comes back again, that by that, God is purifying you. God wants to strengthen you in your faith.

Now some, after they've repented from that sin, if it comes back again, and it troubles them, and they are tempted, then they say, well, what does it help to turn from your sin? And they just give up. Oh, foolish man, don't you realize that God wants to strengthen you? But when that sin comes back again, and you are tempted again, thank God, and say, thank you, Lord, you are teaching me how to kick the devil, and how to overcome him, and how to overcome him, even with a verse from your word. There are many ways that God uses to test and to try us, and also for many reasons.

Let me just mention some of them. The Lord may allow Satan to attack us with a certain sin, that he may strengthen our faith. And God can also help us in various ways, that when that test comes our way, or that temptation, that we can be victorious.

God said to Moses, I will send you manna from heaven. And God did that on a daily basis. And the Bible says, God did it in order to test them.

Whether they would walk according to the precepts and commandments of God. And then, testing and trying comes our way as well, in order to humble us. That we may bow and humble ourselves, and not uplift ourselves.

And not have evil, wicked thoughts, by which we forsake God, in uplifting ourselves and puffing ourselves up. And when we are blessed, that is when Satan will come and attack us more viciously than ever before. That ought not to finish off our strength, but ought to give us strength.

It humbles us, lest we should be proud. And Paul also writes about it in 2 Corinthians 12 verse 7. And he says, this happened to me, lest I should uplift myself or be proud. To keep me from becoming conceited, because of these surpassingly great revelations.

God gave him a thorn in his flesh. And in the Greek language, it's not just a thorn, but it's like a sharpened pole by which you are tormented. And Satan would send his angel, and he would torment Paul in that manner.

And this was to torment me, lest I should become conceited. Because all the great revelations that God had given Paul, all the great blessings with which he had blessed him, God saw that he was in danger to become conceited because of that. And he gave him this spear in his flesh, by which he tormented him.

And a messenger of Satan came, and he tormented him and he slapped him, lest he should become conceited. So when you are tested and tried, understand that God has in mind to strengthen you. God can even test us in this manner, that he delivers us over to the things of this world.

In this manner, that we receive many material things, to test us and to see whether we are going to build our hope upon those things. But God's intention by that is, when he gives us and he blesses us with these things, is to strengthen us. Don't trust in yourself and be confident now, self-confident because God gave you these things, or God blessed you with these things.

No, not in the least. John tells us that before the Lord satisfied all these multitudes with those few loaves and fish, Jesus lifted up his eyes, and he saw all these multitudes coming to him. And God spoke to Philip and said, Philip, where will we find bread to feed all these thousands? And when Jesus asked Philip that, he did it because he was testing Philip.

For he already knew the Lord Jesus, how he was going to feed these multitudes. And he knew how he was going to do it. We are tested and tried because of this eternal hope which is within us.

And when our testing endures a long time, then we have this desire in us which Paul expressed. He said, this short period of suffering cannot be compared with the inexpressible and surpassing greatness and glory of heaven that we are going to experience. So when you experience this suffering and endure it for a short time, then fix your eyes on that glory, that which God has prepared for you for the future.

Another reason why God tests and tries us is because he wants to see what it is that we are living for. And what we love. When Abraham was tested to sacrifice his only son whom he loved, it wasn't only to test his faith, but it was also to see whether he loved God more than anything else and more than his son.

There should be nothing and there should be no one in our lives whom we love more than God. And God said, oh Israel, what is it that the Lord requires of you? But that you fear God, that you walk in his ways and love him and serve him with all your heart. We find that in Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 12.

And the reason why God tests and tries us is in order that we may thank him for his blessings. That we thank and serve God more than the things of this world. But our thoughts and intents may be to thank and to praise God.

The testing and trying of our faith is in order that we should thank God for his abundant, overflowing spiritual blessings. Including his word. And his taking care of us, providing for us.

And thanking him for his keeping power and his salvation. And God tests us and tries us that we may gain new strength from that, that God may work through us. And God said, if everything is smooth and plain sailing, then we rely on that instead of on our faith.

So the calibre of a soldier, and it's true the value of that soldier, and his courage, that doesn't get revealed when everything is easy and in time of peace. That's right. The worth of a soldier is never known in times of war.

Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 10, That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. Then I am strong.

When I am tested and tried, that is when I am strong, when I overcome in those situations. And lastly, God tests and tries us in order that we also will be able to help others in their time of testing and trial. Jesus said to Peter, Satan had desired to sift you like wheat, but I prayed for you, that you would not lose your faith.

Simon, after that, after you have overcome, then you need to strengthen your brethren as well. Hezekiah overcame in that test when it went concerning his survival. And when he was tested in that illness.

When he passed the test of security in sickness. But he failed the test of success. In order for you to overcome in your testing, see to it that your faith is founded and built upon God.

And in wealth in God, spiritual wealth, and then God can keep you and will keep you till the end. I'll close with this parable. There was a tortoise that wanted to migrate to warmer countries.

But he realised on foot, I'll never make it. And he saw many geese. And he said that he wanted to hitch a ride with them.

So he took a piece of rope. And so there were the rope splits, there he bit it with his mouth and held it with his mouth. And so all these pieces of rope, the geese held on to that, and he went, they all came together, he bit onto that.

And as they were flying overhead with his tortoise in mid-air, somebody looked up and he said, oh, look at that amazing sight. And said, look how amazing how that tortoise can fly. Who ever in his life had beheld a sight like that, a flying tortoise flying to another country? And as the tortoise overheard what they were saying and how they were so amazed, he opened his mouth and he said, it was all my idea.

He said, this was my idea that I initiated and thought of. You can imagine the outcome of that, the result, when he opened his mouth and let go of all of these ropes, down he went. And he said, look at that amazing sight.

And that which God then sees in your heart, and that which people will see, and that God will be pleased with it. God wants only his name to be uplifted and glorified. God wants only his name to be uplifted and

glorified.

And if that is what your heart is like, there'll be a sweet smelling fragrance. That song said, Lord, increase in me your wisdom and your love. May that increase in me.

Amen.

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