

# The Testing of Our Faithfulness

God proved, tested, or tried Abraham's faithfulness, "And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt [nacah 5254] Abraham**" (Gen 22:1). And He tested His people many times: "there **he proved [nacah 5254] them**" (Exo 15:25); "**that I may prove [nacah 5254] them**, whether they will walk in my law, or no" (Exo 16:4); "**God is come to prove [nacah 5254] you**, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Exo 20:20); "to humble thee, **and to prove [nacah 5254] thee, to know what was in thine heart**, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no ... that he might humble thee, and that **he might prove [nacah 5254] thee**, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deu 8:2,16); "for the LORD your God **proveth [nacah 5254] you**, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deu 10:10); "That through them **I may prove [nacah 5254] Israel**, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not" (Jdg 2:22); "Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, **to prove [nacah 5254] Israel** by them ... And they were **to prove [nacah 5254] Israel** by them" (Jdg 3:1,4).

Is the message of *sola fide* or "faith alone" proposed by Martin Luther about 500 years ago the true gospel? It seems not to be. Scripture is clear that salvation is by faithfully serving the Lord Jesus Christ, not by simply believing some facts are true—it's not by faith but by faithfulness: "the person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness" (Hab 2:4 NET), "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" (Hab 2:4 NIV), "The just shall live by faith [faithfulness]" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). Therefore, the Lord tests our faithfulness to Him regularly.

Moses said that the reason God tested His people was "to prove [nacah 5254] thee, **to know what was in thine heart**" (Deu 8:2). But God already sees and knows our hearts. Why test us? Jesus Christ told all seven of the churches in Asia, "I know thy works [actions]" (Rev 2:2,9,13,19, 3:1,8,15). And then said "I am he which **searcheth the reins and hearts**: and I will give unto every one of you **according to your works [actions]**" (Rev 2:23). He was quoting Jeremiah's words about Himself, "**I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins**, even to give every man **according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings**" (Jer 17:10). Christ reveals what's in our hearts by testing our actions—whether we're faithful or unfaithful to Him.

Jeremiah was afflicted both physically and verbally, "Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks" (Jer 20:2), "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me" (v. 7). He became discouraged to the point that he wasn't going to preach anymore, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name" (v. 9). But then he learned that these hardships were testing his heart, "But, O LORD of hosts, that **triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart**, let me see thy vengeance on them: for **unto thee have I opened my cause**" (v. 12). His action of entrusting his cause to God revealed his faithfulness to Him.

The theme of James' letter is the testing of our faithfulness, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that **the trying of your faith [faithfulness]** worketh patience" (Jas 1:2-3). And he cited Abraham's testing as an example, "God did tempt [test] Abraham" (Gen 22:1), "Was not Abraham our father justified by works [actions], when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith [faithfulness] wrought with his works [actions], and by works [actions] was faith [faithfulness] made perfect?" (Jas 2:21-22). Abraham's obedient actions, "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen 22:18), justified his faithfulness to God. It's not "faith without works" (Jas 2:20) as translated, but "faithfulness without actions." If we're not faithful in our actions, we're not faithful.

Peter also wrote about the testing of our faithfulness, "**That the trial of your faith [faithfulness]**, being much more precious than of **gold that perisheth**, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory **at the appearing of Jesus Christ**" Receiving the end of your faith [faithfulness], **even the salvation of your souls**" (1Pe 1:7,9). Tested and proven faithfulness to the Lord is much more valuable than any amount of gold because the end result of our faithfulness is that our souls will be saved from death at the return of the Lord!

Are we saved by "faith alone," or by tested and proven faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus said, "I know thy works [actions]" and "I will give unto every one of you according to your works [actions]." And it's the actions of the dead that will be judged, "**the dead were judged** out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works [actions]** ... **they were judged** every man **according to their works [actions]**" (Rev 20:12,13). It's not that they didn't believe but that they didn't act! The Lord tests our faithfulness to Him by our actions.