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# **Testing and Spiritual Warfare**

**522-B**

**Series: Testing**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Testing and Spiritual Warfare

One more time, "This is a test!" This time it is for real. I want you to get a piece of paper and jot down the answers to these questions. There are three bedrock principles to remember about testing. Fill in the blanks as I name those three.

## PART 1

1- Remember that testing is by \_\_\_\_\_ . Would it help if I gave you the first word? It is divine.

2- Testing is more often a \_\_\_\_\_ than a \_\_\_\_\_.

3- Since testing is initiated and limited by God, it is therefore \_\_\_\_\_ by God.

## ANSWERS- PART 1

1) divine appointment. 2) a commendation than a condemnation. 3) controlled

## PART 2

God does this in many ways.

1- God creates a \_\_\_\_\_.

2- God tests recent \_\_\_\_\_.

3- God allows \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

4- God gives \_\_\_\_\_ tasks.

5- Sometimes God allows physical \_\_\_\_\_.

6- Sometimes, as in Abraham and Isaac, He takes away our \_\_\_\_\_.

## ANSWERS- PART 2

1) need so that He can meet those needs; 2) instruction; 3) prosperity or success; 4) impossible; 5) affliction; 6) fondest treasure.

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### IN REVIEW- REASONS GOD TESTS HIS CHILDREN

Think back over the tests in your life this past week as we scan the reasons that God tests His children.

1- God wants to develop the mind of Christ in us. He wants us to see life from His point of view.

2- God wants to surface our weaknesses.

3- God tests us on occasion to humble us.

4- God tests us to advance the kingdom. He wants to place us strategically where we are needed. Sometimes we pray for the will of God, and a test comes into our life. He places us or keeps us in a given spot to accomplish the advancement of the kingdom.

5- God tests us to get us back to the Bible.

6- God tests us to enlarge our vision of Himself. He wants to get us to realize, "This is a test, but God is all He says He is."

7- God tests us to equip us to minister to others. He wants to grant us grace that is reusable.

8- God tests us to teach us, experientially, how to pray. The fire of testing sometimes comes so that God, in His grace mercy, can grant us the fire extinguisher of the Word to take us to our knees and teach us how to pray.

### WAYS TO PRAY DURING A TEST

In the last lesson we looked at a few ways that the Psalmist prayed when he was being tested.

1- He always asked God specifically for grace and mercy.

2- He was honest with God about the circumstances and how he felt about them.

3- He learned how to cry out and scream out for help.

4- He learned how to meditate on the Word, the worth, the works and the ways of God.

5- He learned in the midst of it all to begin to praise Him for those same four things.

### REASON 9- TO PROVE GOD IS AND WHAT GOD DOES.

In this lesson, we turn to the ninth reason God tests His children. I can tell you from personal experience this week that He does test recent instruction and future instruction. One reason

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that God tests His children is to prove something to somebody. That somebody is Satan. The something He wants to prove is who God is and what God does. He tests us to prove to Satan the faithfulness of God. The most difficult thing for most Christians to do is to perceive all of life from a spiritual perspective. For the most part, we really live kind of schizophrenic lives as Christians. I have heard so many people say, "Before I became a Christian I had much less conflict in my life." That is true in many cases. Many times before a person became a Christian there was much less conflict in his life. There are a few reasons for that.

We have a body and a soul. That soul has a mind, emotion and will. It has a thinker, a feeler and a decider. Our body and our soul, as unbelievers, basically were responsive to a physical world through physical senses obeying physical laws with physical penalties and physical rewards. So the law was cut and dried. We basically operated in the realm of the flesh. There was not much conflict except that occasionally we would step over one of those laws and have to pay a penalty for it.

Then Jesus Christ came into our lives with all the glory and the beauty. He gave the Holy Spirit to us freely, and we became a born again child of God. With God living inside of us, there is still body and soul, but now there is a living Spirit within us. Our minds, emotions and wills are in the midst of warfare and conflict. Our body is still trying to respond to the physical senses and the physical laws, but now we have a living Spirit, the Holy Spirit, living within us trying to get us to respond to the spiritual senses and the spiritual laws through the Word of God. Now there is conflict in almost every area of our lives between whether we are going to respond to the flesh or the Spirit.

Most Christians in their soul, mind, emotion and will (thinking, feeling and deciding), are clawing for some level of compromise. Unfortunately, that really is where Christianity is in most of our lives. We are clawing for some acceptable measure of compromise. We want to be "spiritual Christians" and still live in the world according to the rules of the world like the world. It is quite a hassle.

The problem is that "God is." God is what? God is spirit, and  
...they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in  
truth. (John 4:24)

So you and I have decisions to make. Christians generally

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face this in one of three ways:

1) Some Christians categorize and compartmentalize life into the spiritual and the physical. They separate out their business, their job and the works that they should do. Then they move into the spiritual world, and they become God's children in certain religious areas and certain areas of morality. The rest of life, their job, their business, their family and their finances, are things they tend to. They believe "God helps them that help themselves." They compartmentalize life and it is a tremendous frustration.

Imagine what it would be like to try to ride two horses at the same time. You would have one leg over one horse and one leg over the other one. It would be fine as long as the horses were going in the same direction. But, horses don't usually do that. Let's suppose that one wanted to go south and one wanted to go north. That could make for a problem. This is where most Christians are. We are trying to ride the backs of both horses simultaneously. As they part company, as they inevitably do, we are torn.

2) Some grieve the Spirit and try to live after the flesh. In other words, they say, "I just can't live the Christian life. I've tried, and it is too rough. I am going to go through all of the outward, external motions. I am going to be faithful to go to church and do all of the other activities, but I am going to live the way I want to live. I am going to play the game."

3) Some earnestly try to live in the spiritual realm but use the physical guidelines. I'm afraid that is the trap most of us are in. We are unaware of the spiritual significance of everything that goes on around us. In other words, every circumstance, every decision and every response in your life has deep spiritual significance attached to it. Nothing is outside of the realm of the spirit in the Christian's life. This is God's perspective. Every incidence is without accident in the life of the Christian. God is engaged in an intense struggle with a very real enemy, Satan, for the control of the lives of His children. This battle is for your life and my life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Satan and God are in conflict over your life.

I don't like to teach on this subject for several reasons. For one thing, I don't like the spiritual warfare that goes on while I'm doing it. That is selfish. Secondly, I never like to dwell on Satan. I seldom teach on him because I don't want to give him more

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place than he has due. I don't want to elevate him to a position of importance. But we have to be honest and realistic about the warfare that we are engaged in. When we are tested, most of us as Christians don't stop to realize the spiritual significance of all of these tests.

God causes or allows circumstances and tests to come into your life to create a need for grace. He then provides that grace and defeats the enemy head-on. That is His business. God is never defeated by Satan

...because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.  
(I John 4:4)

But He allows setbacks in your life and in my life when we are not allowing the Spirit to be free in our lives to operate in the spiritual realm.

I want to add another phrase to our sentence, "This is a test, but God is, therefore let us pray." This was the focus until this lesson. I'd like to insert something. "This is a test. This is spiritual warfare. But, God is, therefore let us pray."

I want to give some examples. Maybe you are involved in a financial crisis. This is not primarily a physical problem. I don't mean that the physical aspect of it is not real. There is a struggle going on in heaven between Satan and God over your finances and your spiritual response to those finances. This is what really is at stake. God said,

For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.  
(Psalm 50:10)

He could meet your financial obligations yesterday if He wanted to. It is not often His will to do so. It is not always His will to do so in the way that you and I would choose that He do it. That is why it is so great that we are not in God's position.

Nonetheless, that financial crisis and that financial principle is basically a spiritual struggle. God is trying to get control of your life in the pocketbook, spiritually speaking. For that reason there is a financial crisis in your life. You and I tend to deal with these financial crises along the guidelines of Scripture, but we tend to look at it as a physical problem. It is a spiritual problem as well.

There may be illness in your life or in the life of a loved one. Don't say that this is not a real physical problem. It is. It is very

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real, but it is a spiritual problem as well. Satan loves to bring illness into the lives of the children of God. God allows it for a purpose. There is a conflict. As long as the purposes of God are achieved in the spirit, so what? How about the illness? The goals of a Christian are spiritual. This is an eternal kingdom with eternal rewards. We have to lift ourselves out of the realm of the physical into the realm of the spiritual and see it from God's perspective.

### PRINCIPLES OF TESTING AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Let me give six principles that we will cover in this lesson and the next. These principles concern testing and spiritual warfare.

1- Every time you are tested, you are engaged in spiritual warfare. Every time.

2- On every occasion crucial spiritual victories are at stake. I believe that there is a battle to conclusion on every issue between Satan and God in your life and mine for that specific area.

3- The battle is basically won or lost in the battlefield of the mind. The battle is basically won or lost between the ears.

4- Satan's devices are varied, but Satan's goals are consistent. Therefore, we can learn how he operates and we can defend ourselves in the conflict.

5- God rejoices and Satan is hostile when we properly respond to the tests of life.

6- Therefore, the reputation of God and the frustration of Satan are at stake every time you realize, "This is a test!" In other words, we can begin to get excited over the tests of life for another reason. This reason is that God is able to say to Satan, "See, grace works. Scram." You and I are partners in the conflict and in the victory.

Principle 1- Every time you are tested you are engaged in spiritual warfare. Turn to Ephesians 5. This is a familiar passage to many, nonetheless, I want to scan it in order to gain from this passage a perspective of life. Remember that in Ephesians 5 and the first few verses of chapter 6, Paul is listing some of the major battlegrounds of spiritual warfare in the Christian's life. He breaks them down into three basic categories: the church, the family and the job. These are the major battlegrounds of spiritual warfare in most people's lives.

Be careful how you live—not as unwise (men) but as wise (men),

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making the most of every opportunity (use of your time),  
because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15,16 NIV)

Submit yourselves to one another in love. Learn to humble  
yourself before each other. (Ephesians 5:21 paraphrase)

The inference is particularly to those to whom you don't want  
to humble yourself.

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the  
Lord. (Ephesians 5:22 NIV)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and  
gave Himself for it; (Ephesians 5:25)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord... (Ephesians 6:1)

Fathers, don't exasperate your children; (in the way you  
discipline them) (Ephesians 6:4 NIV)

Employees, obey your employer.

Employers be considerate and sensitive towards the needs  
of your employees (Ephesians 6:5,9 paraphrase)

Paul has laid out some of the major conflicts of the Christian  
faith. He continues in verses 10-12 to put it together. In  
verse 10 he gives us instruction. In verse 11 he gives us protection.  
In verse 12 he gives us an explanation. The instruction is,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power  
of His might. (Ephesians 6:10)

There is an inference in this verse that it means to draw up  
all of your spiritual muscle and be strong. What it literally means  
is to be strengthened by the Lord. You don't have any strength of  
your own, but you are to be strong in the Lord. The word literally  
means to clothe yourself with the strength of God. The Phillips  
Translation says to "be strong in the Lord and not in yourself." I  
think that is better. In other words, get inside of God because God  
is. God is what? God is omnipotent. He is all strength. Be strong  
in the Lord and in the power of His might. The power means to be  
energized by the same active force that is inherent in Christ. We  
are told by Paul, in other places, that this is the same power that  
raised Christ from the dead that is now available to you and me.

Our protection, then, as pointed out by Paul, is

...(now) be strong in the Lord (as you)...

...put on the whole armour of God... (Ephesians 6:10,11)



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The inference here is to put on every piece because none of it is unimportant. Hide yourself in Christ by clothing yourself with all of His battle gear. The inference here is that there is a war out there. It is spiritual, and we need to clothe ourselves with the gear that God gives us to win the conflict.

...that you may be able to stand... (Ephesians 6:11 NKJV)

The word literally means to take a position without taking an offensive. Stand. We are to be able to stand in the midst of the conflict. He will be the aggressor.

...that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11 NKJV)

The word “wiles” means stratagem and planned deceit that is carefully thought through and methodically planned. The wiles of the devil are deceitful.

Here, then, is the explanation from verse 12, the reason for it all: the real conflict is not physical.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood... (Ephesians 6:12)

The word “wrestle” is a Greek athletic term that was used to describe the Greek wrestling matches. It involved two men who would struggle inevitably to a decision. The loser always had his eyes gouged out so that he could never see again. That is the connotation of this word. If we are honest with ourselves, that is the intensity of the struggle that you and I are engaged with in terms of spiritual warfare. We are not wrestling against people. We are not wrestling against worldly systems. We are not wrestling against physical circumstances. Those are all here and they are real, but the real battle is against the spirit world. The real battle is not against flesh and blood. The real battle is a match to the finish. It means that a decision is imminent in each case. The Greeks never had a wrestling match that was called a draw. The match was over when one man was pinned helplessly and hopelessly. The loser would then be incapacitated. That is the kind of wrestling we do in the spirit world. Paul tells us that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood but rather

...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)

In other words, we are wrestling against echelons of satanic

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destroyers. We are wrestling against Satan's chain of command. In the Phillips Translation it says,

In conclusion, be strong—not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of His boundless strength and resource.

Put on God's complete armour so that you can successfully resist all the devil's methods of attack (and craftiness).

For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.

(Ephesians 6:10-12 JB Phillips)

The New English Bible says,

For our fight is not against human foes but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens.

(Ephesians 6:12 NEB)

The Living Bible paraphrases it by saying,

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand safe against all strategies and tricks of Satan.

For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.

(Ephesians 6:11,12 TLB)

I am not trying to make this an ominous lesson. I want to create, from the Word, an honest look at the battle we are involved in. It is real. It is a spiritual struggle. The circumstances and the incidents that take place in your life and mine as we recognize "This is a test!", have tucked within them deep, spiritual connotations. There is a struggle going on between God and Satan for the control of your life and mine in the midst of that test.

Secondly, because the conflict is spiritual, the stakes, which are high, are spiritual victories. The battlegrounds may be circumstantial in appearance, but they are spiritual in context. Scan the things that happened to you this past week. Maybe there was something major like going to buy some new clothing, and they didn't have your size. Maybe there was something more major like running out of gas on the freeway. I'm not making light of these things, but try to examine them in the light of what is serious and crucial to us. I could name some of the things that

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threw me this week, and you would roll with laughter and say, “Why did that bother you?” To me they were big deals because they were tests. As I began to look back, I could see a spiritual conflict involved in each of those tests that I was at first totally unaware of. I was unmindful and unconcerned about them.

In Deuteronomy 8, a passage that we have gone through many times before, there are the pivotal verses explaining this whole principle. God took away food from the children of Israel to test them. They were hungry. He gave them back food they didn’t like and didn’t want. He created dependence upon Himself as He said He would. The reason was to teach them a spiritual truth. The truth is that

...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that  
proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

He could have given them anything they wanted to eat, but He was teaching them spiritual truth.

The same thing is true in the story of Abraham and Isaac as we studied in Genesis 22. Abraham and Isaac’s real problem was a spiritual problem. It was a spiritual test that God was using to find out if He was on the throne of Abraham’s life.

Now turn to Job 1. This is another passage we have dealt with a number of times, but I want to deal with it a little differently in this lesson. We need to recognize that the reason we deal with it so often is that this book of the Bible has been put there to teach us the mind of God toward testing. In Job 1 it says,

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present  
themselves before the LORD and Satan came also among  
them. (Job 1:6)

There was a prayer meeting in heaven. All of the angels gathered with God to have a prayer meeting. There was a guest who came in, and his name was Satan. Satan has been given access to the courts of heaven by divine decree. He does not belong there. He does not deserve to be there. But, because God has an intense purpose in the lives of His children, He allows Satan to come to heaven. God uses him as a tool because he is the prince of this world. God wants to use the circumstances of this world to change the lives of His children. Therefore, God allows Satan to come into heaven.

I think that God teases Satan and he falls for it. Satan thinks

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it was his idea to test Job as well as other Christians. God shakes His head and says, “Why don’t you just try that.” Satan, with all of his newfound freedom, comes into our lives with these tests. God knows in advance the needs of our hearts. He knows in advance the response of our hearts. Knowing in advance the goal of His heart in terms of creating the mind of Christ in us and His goal of humbling and teaching us, He gives Satan the freedom to test us. Satan thinks it is his idea. Memorize Genesis 50:20 and review it again and again and again. It applies, it applies, it applies.

(Joseph turned and said,) ...ye thought evil against (you meant evil unto to) me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass this day to save much people alive.”

(Genesis 50:20)

You can say that to the devil every time he hassles you. You can say, “You meant evil unto me, but God means it unto good.”

In Job 1:6, Satan comes into the prayer meeting. God initiates the conversation. He often does. He turns to Satan and says, “Satan, what have you been doing?” Now God knows what he has been doing. God says, “What has been going on in your life?”

Satan answers the Lord as his chest pops out and says, “I’ve been strutting around the earth. I’ve been roaming about walking to and fro. I have been making my presence felt.”

God answers, “Really? That is interesting. Have you ever met my servant Job? He is a great guy. There is nobody like him on the earth. He is blameless. He is upright. He fears God and he turns from evil.”

I know the inference in this passage is not that Job is sinless, but I still believe that God implies that Job is almost beyond reproach in order to get Satan’s dander up. Satan falls hook, line and sinker for it. God gives him a glowing testimony of Job.

Satan says, “Wait a minute! I’ve got his number. Let me tell you why Job is such a great guy. First of all, You’ve protected him. Secondly, You’ve blessed him. Thirdly, You’ve prospered him. Anybody would follow You if You did that for them. He doesn’t really love You for who You are, he loves You for what You’ve done. Why don’t You, God, put forth Your hand and touch all that he has? He will curse You to Your face. Why don’t You destroy these things and see what he does?”

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God very graciously says, “Wait a minute. You are the destroyer. I will give you permission to destroy those things. We will watch Job because his heart means so much more to Me than his possessions.”

God gives Satan permission to test Job within certain limits. Satan had challenged God with the implication that Job would deny that God was God if he lost his possessions. Job never did that. He had some questions and some frustrations, but he never did that. God knew he wouldn't. So God returned the permission to destroy to the one who liked to destroy because He had a spiritual goal for Job that could only be realized through spiritual warfare. There are some things in your life and mine that can only be realized the same way. Let's continue with verse 12,

The LORD said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not put forth your hand (on him).

(Job 1:12)

I think it is so interesting to see Satan's response to this situation. He is such an over-reactor that he blows his hand so much of the time because he is so impulsive. When we get impulsive, we need to check out the source sometime. Satan was so impulsive. Was he relaxed about the way he handled it? In a matter of hours he had wiped out everything Job had. In fact, it was such a shock that I believe that Job was able to say, “Wait a minute. Something is going on here.” He may not have understood the spiritual conflict, but this was too much too soon. Satan just blew his hand by doing the whole thing in one lick.

Episode two takes place a few verses down. Satan comes back and goes through the same thing with God. God allows a higher setting on the thermostat. Satan says, “Job is still hanging in there, but You haven't let me touch his body yet.”

God replies, “Okay, Set it to 380°, just under broil, because inside that body is a man who loves Me.”

So once again, Satan didn't mess around with a cold or the flu or a hangnail. Satan gave him all he had. I think it is interesting to see.

Then the LORD said 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? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without a cause.”

(Job 2:3 NKJV)

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If you really look carefully, you can see a holy sarcasm in God's voice as He deals with the enemy. In Matthew 4, we will find the same principles apply. This is another place in Scripture where God and the enemy meet head on. We are given a verbal account of what takes place. The Son of God is in the wilderness. Satan himself comes to meet Him head on. Have you ever thought of the principles to be noted here? Satan tried to do three basic things.

1- He tried to make physical application to spiritual truth. He said, "God will give You what You want. It says that right here in the Bible. Just ask. Whatever You want, God will give it to You. Just talk to those stones and they will turn into bread. That is what God was talking about when He said that He will give You what You want. The possessions of this world and the things of this world is what He wants to give You."

Do you want a new suit? Ask God for it. Satan says that if you ask God, He will have to answer you the way you want Him to. So that a friendship will have to work, or a situation will have to work out, or you get a particular job you want, or you make that amount of money that you want, or whatever you feel you have to have. But God didn't promise you all of those things.

God promises us a spiritual kingdom that will change the world and change us. Satan comes to Jesus and says, "Why don't You just turn those stones into bread? That is what God said He would do. He said that He would give you bread anytime you wanted it."

We just saw this same problem in Deuteronomy 8, didn't we? We see this same problem with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21. He tried to make physical application to spiritual truth. Jesus said, "You must be born again." Nicodemus replied, "I won't fit inside my mother's womb again. How will that work?" All through the gospels the disciples and the hearers were confused. Jesus would give them a parable with a spiritual truth and they would try to magnify the physical aspect of the parable and forget about the spiritual truth.

2- Satan did this to Jesus and he will try to do it to you. He tried to focus on experience over truth. He said, "Let's have a miracle, Jesus. Don't You like miracles? Let's play 'Test God.' Take a jump and tell God to come to Your rescue." We see this in Matthew 4. Have you ever done that? I don't mean off of a

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mountain like Satan did. Have you ever done this with God? You may have done something outside of the will of God. What Satan was saying was, “Do something stupid then cry, ‘God, Help!’ ” Have you ever done that?

Satan was saying, “Tempt the Lord Your God.” Jesus answered, “How am I supposed to do that?” Satan said, “Put out the fleece.” Be careful about those fleeces. I don’t think fleeces were meant for constant use. Most of the time I think our fleeces don’t work because they are circumstantial and because of the passage in James that says,

Ye ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3)

This means that we ask for things so that we can meet our own needs. Sometimes we put the fleece out just to watch God answer the fleece and say, “That was great to see God do that. I enjoyed that.” We are playing with the mind and the time of a sovereign God.

This second area may affect your relationships with other people. It may affect your financial situation. We do something stupid and then we will say, “Help, God!” When He doesn’t come immediately to our aid and answer our problem the way we thought He should, we begin to shake our fists and become bitter and say, “His promises don’t work.”

3- Satan tried to get Jesus to trade His relationship with the Father for more favorable circumstances. Have you ever tried to do that? You may say, “I know that I could have deeper spiritual insight into His will and the Word of God if I were to pass through this situation, but I sure would rather have had a life of ease. I just don’t want to go through that.”

Satan said, “I’ll give you everything you want in this world, Jesus. There will be no problems attached if You would just trade Your relationship with the Father for that. Fall down and worship me.”

Jesus replied, “No, I am to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and these things will be added unto Me.”

I would like to ask you to do something this week. As the tests of life come, remember that these are spiritual tests involving spiritual warfare between God and the enemy. There is a real conversation going on about us. There is real concern going on

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in the heart of God to see us pass the test in Christ. There is real anguish in the heart of Satan when we climb up into the authority of Scripture, clothe ourselves in the mighty power of God and stand firm. Do that this week for God's glory and for your growth.

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