

# The Purpose of Testing

July 1997

Dear Friend,

*"What is man . . . that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?"<sup>1</sup>*

Isn't that an amazing revelation—that God visits us every morning and tests us every moment?

When it first became real to me, I had to ask myself: *Am I prepared to receive a visit from God every morning? Do I wake up with that expectation?*

Then I went on to ask myself: *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.

A jeweler will subject gold or silver to certain tests. He does this because they are valuable. He does not bother to test base metals such as iron or tin.

In the world of the patriarchs there was one man of outstanding righteousness. His name was Job. God was proud of Job. He 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?"<sup>2</sup>*

Characteristically, Satan's response was to attribute 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 Satan to destroy everything that belonged to Job: his possessions, his servants and his children. Then God even permitted Satan to touch Job's body—to afflict him with boils from head to toe. But He did not permit Satan to take Job's life.

Job recognized that God was testing him. *"When He has tested me,"* he said, *"I shall come forth as gold"<sup>3</sup>*—that is, gold that had been tested by fire. This gave him the strength to endure. He cried out in agony of soul, but he never gave up.

Typically, Eliphaz and Job's other two religious friends concluded that Job's sufferings were due to sins he had committed and they brought all sorts of terrible accusations against him. In the end, however, God vindicated Job and rebuked his friends. He told Eliphaz, *"You have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."<sup>4</sup>*

Abraham was another righteous man who was subjected to severe tests—even to the point of being required to offer his son to God as a burnt offering. 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.

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The New Testament clearly warns us that, as Christians, we must expect to undergo testing. Peter compares our faith to gold, the genuineness of which must be tested by fire.<sup>5</sup>

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.*<sup>6</sup>

On different occasions Ruth and I have each had to repent and ask God's forgiveness because we did not respond rightly to some of our tests. We did not count them all joy!

Further on, James takes 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 merciful.*<sup>7</sup>

### Testing or Chastening?

It is vitally important that we learn to distinguish between God's testing and His chastening. Many people seem to assume that once they become Christians they are exempt from God's chastening—especially if they have been believers for any length of time. This attitude, however, has no basis in Scripture. To such believers Hebrews gives a powerful warning:

*And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:*

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,  
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;  
For whom the LORD loves He chastens,  
And scourges every son whom He receives."*

*If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*<sup>8</sup>

In this connection God impressed upon me the example of His dealings with 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.<sup>9</sup>

Why? Because of his disobedience. Moses had not fulfilled the covenant of circumcision which the Lord had made with Abraham and his descendants.<sup>10</sup> Only when Moses repented and had his son circumcised, did the Lord spare Moses' life and release him to go on his way. God would rather have killed Moses than have permitted him to go through with his mission in disobedience. His position as a leader did not exempt him from God's discipline. It made him all the more accountable.

For me, now in my 82nd year, there is a personal application. I cannot expect to complete my God-given assignment if I make room for disobedience in my life.

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 sincerely allow the Lord to search our hearts and He does not put His finger on anything that is offensive to Him, then we may conclude that we are under God's testing, not His chastening.

What God reveals will determine how we respond. Our response to chastening should be to **repent**; our response to testing should be to **endure**. But if we persist in trying to endure when we should repent, we are guilty of stubbornness and insensitivity.

### What Is God Looking For?

The basic issues of sin or righteousness are defined in Satan's original temptation of Adam and Eve. His Greek title *diabolos* (English *devil*) means *slanderer*. To slander someone means to *defame their character*. This is Satan's primary activity.

First and foremost, Satan defames the character of God Himself. Hence his original question to Eve: "*Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?*"<sup>11</sup> Satan implied that God was a despot—arbitrary, unfair and unloving. God was shutting Adam and Eve out from a "higher level" of knowledge which would open up 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.

From mistrust of God's goodness, Adam and Eve moved to disbelief in God's word and then to the act of disobedience. There were three stages in their fall: **mistrust**, **disbelief** and **disobedience**.

Through faith in Christ, God has provided a redemption that reverses the downward process of the fall. It replaces disbelief with faith, disobedience with obedience, and mistrust with trust. Faith leading to obedience is the first stage. But the process is not complete until faith has developed into trust.

What is the difference between faith and trust? A non-theological answer would be: faith is an **act**; trust is an **attitude**. (It was Smith Wigglesworth who continually emphasized that faith is an act.)

A clear illustration of the difference between faith, as an act, and trust, as an attitude, is provided in Psalm 37:5 (NAS):

*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 that follows the initial act of committing. After that, God takes over: *He will do it*.

A simple illustration would be making a deposit in a savings bank. You hand your money to the teller and receive a receipt. That is *committing*.

After that, you do not lie awake at night wondering: *Is the bank really taking care of my money? Am I receiving the interest due to me?* You just put the receipt in a safe place and sleep soundly. That is *trust*.

Many Christians take the first step, an act of faith, but do not maintain an attitude of trust. Strangely, many of us find it easier to trust an earthly bank than to trust God in heaven!

A primary purpose behind God's tests is to produce trust in us. This was true of Job. In the midst of all his trials he affirmed: "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.*"<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, trust momentarily enabled Job to lift his eyes above the realm of time and 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,  
Whom I shall see for myself,  
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.  
How my heart yearns within me!"<sup>13</sup>*

Why is trust so important? Because it reveals our **estimate of God's character**. When Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptation, their actions spoke louder than any words they might have uttered. They were saying: "God is not just and loving. He is not dealing fairly with us. He is not to be trusted."

Our salvation from sin is not complete until it has undone the effects of the fall and produced in us this quality of **trust**. This may require us to go through many tests. It is important that we never lose sight of God's end purpose: to produce in us an unshakable confidence in His absolute trustworthiness.

Jesus Himself has provided us with the supreme example of trust. In fulfillment of His Father's plan, He was handed over to wicked, cruel and godless men. They mocked Him, spat on Him, flogged Him, stripped Him naked and nailed Him to a cross. Eventually He cried out, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*"<sup>14</sup>

Yet in all this His trust in His Father's faithfulness never failed. With His last breath He yielded His spirit back to the Father.

How do we respond if we cry out to God and He does not seem to answer us? Can we still trust His faithfulness?

Remember, God is more concerned with our character than with our achievements. Achievements have importance only in the realm of time. Character is eternal. It determines what we will be through eternity.

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

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation [testing]; for when he has been proved [approved], he will receive the crown of life.<sup>15</sup>*

Yours in the Master's service,



Derek Prince

P.S. While working on this letter, I felt it would be important to consider more fully **how to respond to testing**. Probably this will be the theme of my next teaching letter.

<sup>1</sup> Job 7:17–18

<sup>4</sup> Job 42:7

<sup>7</sup> James 5:11 (NAS)

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 17:9–14

<sup>13</sup> Job 19:25–27

<sup>2</sup> Job 1:8

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 1:7

<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 12:5–8

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 3:1

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 27:46

<sup>3</sup> Job 23:10

<sup>6</sup> James 1:2–4

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 4:24–26

<sup>12</sup> Job 13:15

<sup>15</sup> James 1:12

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# How to Respond to Testing

October 1997

Dear Friend,

As Christians we will all undergo tests. They may come in many different forms: a crisis in our health or finance; a breakdown in a personal relationship; rejection or persecution because of our faith; some long dark tunnel with no light at the other end. In any time of testing it is important to bear in mind that God is more concerned with our character than our achievements.

How, then, shall we respond to testing?

First of all, we must distinguish between testing and chastening. All too often, as Christians, we fail to recognize God's chastening. As a result, we adopt a posture of resisting the devil when we should in fact be submitting to God. The root character problem that this exposes is PRIDE.

There is a prayer at the end of Psalm 19 that Ruth and I often repeat:

*Who can understand his errors?  
Cleanse me from secret faults.  
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;  
Let them not have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.<sup>1</sup>*

I have come to see that *secret faults* are not secrets that we keep from other people—much less from God. They are secret to ourselves, faults in our own character that we do not recognize. David describes them as *presumptuous sins*—sins that we commit when we *presume* that our conduct is acceptable to God, when in fact it offends Him. Very often God will not reveal such sins to us until we deliberately choose to humble ourselves and invite God to search our character and to lay bare our inmost motives.

Once we are clear that what we are passing through really is a test from God, we need to make sure that “all our bases are covered” (to borrow a phrase from baseball).

## Base No. 1: REPENTANCE

Repentance is perhaps the basic Christian doctrine which is least emphasized by contemporary preachers. “Only believe” is a sweet sounding message, but it is not scriptural. From the beginning to the end of the New Testament, the message is: *first repent, then believe*. When there is any sin in

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our lives, any kind of faith that does not proceed out of repentance is a humanistic counterfeit. It does not produce the results that proceed from genuine faith.

A simple illustration of true repentance is making a U-turn in a vehicle. You recognize that you have not been living the right way. You stop and make a U-turn. After that you proceed in the opposite direction. If you do not end up traveling in the opposite direction, you have not truly repented.

#### **Base No. 2: COMMITMENT**

According to Romans 10:9 there are two essential conditions for salvation: to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead; to confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord.

When you confess Jesus as Lord, you give Him unreserved control over your whole life—your time, your money, your talents, your priorities, your relationships. You cannot hold anything back. “If Jesus is not Lord of all”—someone has said—“then He is not Lord at all.”

#### **Base No. 3: ATTITUDE TO SCRIPTURE**

Satan brought about the downfall of our first parents when he enticed them into questioning the truth of God’s word: “*Has God indeed said . . . ?*”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus Himself set the seal of His divine authority upon the Scripture when He called it *the word of God* and added, “*the Scripture cannot be broken.*”<sup>3</sup>

Paul states categorically, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*<sup>4</sup>

To question the authority of Scripture is a luxury that none of us can afford. It is the path to disaster today just as surely as it was in the garden of Eden.

#### **Base No. 4: RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS**

Right doctrine is the basis of the Christian faith. But right doctrine rightly applied will produce right relationships. Our personal relationships should reflect the doctrine that we profess.

Jesus Himself laid great emphasis on maintaining right relationships. He gave clear guidelines for dealing with a brother who sins against us.<sup>5</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount He warns, “*Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him.*”<sup>6</sup>

He closed His model prayer with a solemn warning: “*But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*”<sup>7</sup>

In any time of testing we should be careful to check our attitudes and our relationships, to make sure that we are not harboring any bitterness or resentment or unforgiveness in our hearts.

We also need to bear in mind that we cannot have right relationships with the wrong people. *Do not be deceived*, Paul warns us, “*Evil company corrupts good manners.*”<sup>8</sup> We cannot lead holy lives if we deliberately consort with unholy people. All such relationships must be cut off with the sharp sword of God’s word.

## The Example of Jesus

The supreme example of right responses to testing is provided by Jesus Himself, who *was in all points tempted [tested] as we are, yet without sin.*<sup>9</sup>

To follow His example requires that we *lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher [perfecter] of our faith.* . . .<sup>10</sup>

It is not sufficient that we deal with things in our lives that are actually sinful. We must also eliminate *weights*—things that are not sinful in themselves, but yet would hinder us from concentrating every effort on our service for Christ.

A runner in a race strips down to the bare minimum. He does not carry one ounce of unnecessary weight. We must do the same. Here are some of the things that we may need to eliminate:

Social obligations that have no spiritual significance – sentimental attachments to people, places or pets – excessive concern with the stock market, sports or women's fashions – window shopping – worries about money, health, family or politics.

Concerning each thing to which we devote time and attention, we need to ask two questions. Does it glorify Jesus? Does it build me up spiritually?

## The Need for Endurance

One essential character requirement throughout Scripture is *endurance*. With many Christians, however, this is not a popular subject. If in my preaching I announce that my theme is to be *endurance*, I hear very few "Hallelujahs" in response. Sometimes I go on to say, "Let me tell you how to cultivate endurance." People listen eagerly, anxious to learn the secret. "There is only one way to cultivate endurance," I continue, "it is by enduring." This is greeted by an almost audible collective sigh. Expressed in words, that sigh says, "You mean there isn't any other easier way?"

No, there is no easier way! Endurance is an essential element of victorious Christian living, and it can only be cultivated by enduring. Once we accept this fact, we can begin to respond rightly to each test that comes our way. We can *count it all joy, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience [endurance].*<sup>11</sup>

But we are warned that we must *let patience [endurance] have its perfect work.*<sup>12</sup> In other words, we must continue to endure until God's purpose has been fully worked out and He brings the test to an end.

Very seldom does God tell us in advance, "This test will last six months." So it may happen that after 5½ months a person will say, "I can't take any more of this; I give up!"

How sad! Another 15 days of enduring, and God's purpose would have been accomplished. Yet now such a person will have to undergo another test, designed to deal with the same character defect. In fact, God will not withdraw His tests until His purpose has been accomplished. The sooner we learn to endure, the more rapid will be our spiritual progress.

In 1 Corinthians 9:25 Paul—like the writer of Hebrews—uses the example of an athlete: *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [exercises self-control] in all things.* Only if we cultivate self-control, will we have the strength to endure.

In 2 Peter 1:5–7 Peter lists seven successive “steps” that lead upward from the foundation of *faith* to the supreme completion of Christian character: *agape love*. These steps are:

*virtue (moral excellence);*

*knowledge;*

*self-control;*

*perseverance (endurance);*

*godliness;*

*brotherly kindness;*

*love.*


This makes it clear that self-control is an essential prerequisite for endurance. Every test of endurance is also a test of self-control. It will expose any weakness in any one of the various areas of our personality.

In the area of the emotions, the weakness may be fear or discouragement or depression. In our fleshly nature it may be unbridled lusts or appetites. In our personal relationships it may be anger or jealousy. In our spiritual development it may be pride or self-confidence.

Whatever the area of weakness may be, it will be exposed when we are confronted with the challenge to endure. It is a tragic fact that many Christians never overcome these two stages of self-control and endurance. Consequently, they never progress to the higher Christian virtues in the remaining three steps: *godliness, brotherly kindness, love.*

It seems appropriate to close this letter with the same Scripture that I closed my previous teaching letter with: *Blessed is the man who endures temptation [testing]; for when he has been proved [approved], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*<sup>13</sup>

Yours in the Master's service,



Derek Prince

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 19:12–13

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:1

<sup>3</sup> John 10:35

<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18:15–17

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:25

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 6:15

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:33

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 4:15

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 12:1–2

<sup>11</sup> James 1:2–3

<sup>12</sup> James 1:4

<sup>13</sup> James 1:12

For further study, we recommend audio cassette 4359C, “Job and His Accusing Friends.”

A contribution to help cover cost will be appreciated, but is not necessary.

For a copy of the first teaching letter on this topic,  
please order “The Purpose of Testing,” TL97-2.



# The Hardest Test of All

December 1997

Dear Friend,

In my two previous letters my focus has been: TESTING. First, *the purpose of testing*; then, *how to respond to testing*. In this final letter on testing, my theme is: *the hardest test of all*.

If I were to ask each one of you individually, *What would you consider the hardest test that Christians face?*, I would probably receive a variety of different answers. My own answer may surprise many of you, but it is based on more than fifty years in full time Christian ministry. I believe that the hardest test we are likely to face—and the one we are least likely to pass—is SUCCESS.

Solomon warns us: *The end of a thing is better than its beginning, and the patient in spirit better than the proud in spirit*. To put it another way: it is not how you start a race that makes you a winner, but how you finish it.

A veteran Chinese pastor, who spent more than 20 years in prison for his faith and recently went to be with the Lord, made this personal comment: "I have seen many people have good beginnings, but few have good endings." I can say the same.

As examples of men who have achieved success, we will consider some of the kings of Israel.

## The First Three Kings

The first king, Saul, was a strong, outstanding young man, who early in his career gained various military victories. But when sent by God on a mission against the Amalekites, he allowed fear of the people to keep him from full obedience to God's command. As a result, the prophet Samuel came to him with a message that God had rejected him as king.

Saul's root problem was summed up in Samuel's message: "When you were *little in your own eyes*, were you not head of the tribes of Israel?" As long as Saul remained humble, God could bless him. But when he became proud, God had to set him aside.

This applies to all of us. When we are little in our own eyes, we have room for the greatness of God. But when we become great in our own eyes, we leave no room for God to manifest His greatness through us.

Saul's pride drove him to a tragic end. The last night of his life he consulted a witch, and the next day he committed suicide on the battlefield.

The next king, David, was a man after God's heart. For years he had to live as a fugitive, persecuted and hounded by King Saul. Yet, he came through it all victoriously and eventually he had a wonderful testimony:

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;  
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.

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For I have kept the ways of the LORD,  
And have not wickedly departed from my God.

But later David changed, and so did his language:

Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.

What had happened? Why the change? David had experienced total *success*. Established as king over all Israel, victorious over all his enemies, he was enjoying the fruits of success. He no longer went out to battle. He remained at home in Jerusalem, free to indulge in all that took his fancy.

So he did not hesitate to seduce Bathsheba, the wife of his neighbor, Uriah. Nor to procure the murder of Uriah to cover up his sin. In David's time of success, he forgot the principles he lived by before he became king.

Thank God that David eventually repented and God forgave his sin. Nevertheless, David's sin cast a dark shadow over his descendants from generation to generation. God warned him: "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house. . . ." It is important for all of us to remember that God's *forgiveness* does not necessarily cancel all the *consequences* of our sins.

David's son, Solomon, who succeeded him as king, was beloved and chosen by God. Because he humbly acknowledged his need of wisdom, God also gave him riches and honor. He became the wisest, richest and most famous of all Israel's kings.

Yet in spite of all his wisdom, Solomon did not pass the test of *success*.

For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods. . . .

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD . . .

In spite of his glorious beginning, Solomon died an idolater.

### Two Other Kings

Following Solomon, the kingdom was divided. *All* the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom, became idolaters and were rejected by the LORD. Many of the kings of the southern kingdom, Judah, also turned away from the LORD into idolatry. There were, however, some truly righteous kings in Judah. Yet none of them fully passed the test of *success*.

Hezekiah, for example, introduced sweeping reforms and re-established the true worship of Jehovah. When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, laid siege to Jerusalem, the LORD intervened and granted a miraculous deliverance to Hezekiah and his people.

Later, when Hezekiah was sick to the point of death, God not merely healed him, but granted him a miraculous sign by reversing the course of the sun. He also promised Hezekiah fifteen extra years of life.

The miraculous sign in the sun extended Hezekiah's fame to other nations. As a result, ambassadors came from Babylon. Flattered by their attention, Hezekiah showed them everything of value in his whole kingdom. But he did not give God the glory!

Scripture provides two illuminating comments on Hezekiah's conduct:

But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up [he became proud] . . .

However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

From Hezekiah we can learn two things:

First, if God grants you some special miracle, that does not make you a special person; it only means that you have a special God.

Second, if God withdraws His presence and does not seem to be actively at work in your life, it can mean that He is testing you to see how you will behave when left to yourself.

Later in Judah's history there arose another righteous king—Josiah. Like Hezekiah, Josiah also introduced radical reforms and restored the true worship of Jehovah. He also destroyed the idolatrous altar at Bethel in the northern kingdom.

But, Josiah's successes made him self-confident, and he became rash. Without consulting the Lord and in the face of solemn warning, he opposed Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, and was killed in battle. With him the last flicker of hope for Judah died also.

### **Successful Men in the New Testament**

What about the New Testament? Does it provide different standards? Let us look at the foremost personalities: Jesus Himself, and three of His leading disciples, Peter, John and Paul. What about their endings?

Jesus, of course, is unique—the perfect, sinless Son of God. He never experienced failure. Yet He ended His life hanging naked on a cross, exposed to mocking sinners. That was the last the world saw of Jesus. His subsequent resurrection, and the glory that followed, were revealed only to "witnesses chosen before by God." As far as the world is concerned, however, God has never sought to set the record straight.

What about Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles? According to reliable tradition, Peter, too, ended his life on a cross—crucified head downward, at his own request, because he did not feel worthy to suffer in the same way as his Lord.

We have no reliable record of the death of John. But we do know that in his old age he was banished to the barren, rocky island of Patmos, where he received the visions recorded in the book of Revelation.

What about Paul? We have his own record of how he and his fellow apostles lived:

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

Finally, after a powerful and miraculous ministry that opened up the Gentile world to the gospel, Paul ended in chains in a cold Roman dungeon, forsaken by some of his closest co-workers. From there he was taken out for public execution by beheading.

Do these records of Jesus, Peter, John and Paul mean that all committed Christians must necessarily die the death of martyrs? Or that no committed Christian could ever be wealthy? No! But they do enforce one extremely important point: *we must never let the world entice us into accepting its standards of success*. We must never seek the world's approval. The desire for popularity is always dangerous.

Jesus gave some strong warnings against this. To the Pharisees He said: "For what is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." To His own disciples He said: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you. For so did their fathers to the false prophets."

### The Key to True Success

Mentally I contrasted the endings of those five kings in the Old Testament with those of Jesus and His disciples. What is the key—I asked—to achieving enduring success?

The Lord directed me to two scriptures. First, the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:25: *I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful* (KJV).

I saw that to be faithful *I must be totally dependent on the Lord's mercy*. I cannot rely on anything else: my academic background, my spiritual gifts, my past achievements, my years in Christian service. There is only one thing that can keep me faithful: *the mercy of God*.

I must make it the central purpose of my life to be consciously and continually dependent on God's mercy. I must be on my guard against anything that would blur or dull my sense of dependence. Particularly, I must be watchful for any form of pride, which is, in essence, self-dependence.

Second, the words of Jesus in John 4:34: "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*." Jesus' food—the source of His life and strength—was His single-minded determination to do God's will right through to the end of His life. That is the *true success* you and I must aim for.

Yours in the Master's service,



Derek Prince

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:8

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 15:17

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 18:20-21

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 51:1-2

<sup>5</sup> 2 Samuel 12:10

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 11:4-6

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:25

<sup>8</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:31

<sup>9</sup> Acts 10:41

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:11-13 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Luke 16:15

<sup>12</sup> Luke 6:26

For further study, we recommend audio cassette 4373C, "**Self-humbling**."

A contribution to help cover cost will be appreciated, but is not necessary.

This is the third letter on the topic of testing. For a copy of the first teaching letter, request "**The Purpose of Testing**," TL97-2. For a copy of the second teaching letter, please order "**How to Respond to Testing**," TL97-3.