

TESTING THE HEART

A friend of mine recently collapsed unexpectedly on his way to work. Tests revealed he had suffered a heart attack. Heart problems are common. They are a huge killer.

The same is true of the spiritual heart. Problems are common and it is a huge killer. God knows all about the human heart and tests it to see whether it is spiritually healthy or not. Consider Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 2:4: *'We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts'*.

The ecclesia at Thessalonica was suffering severe persecution from zealous Jews. Would they remain faithful during this time of testing? They trusted in God to see them through the difficulties and by patiently enduring their trials, they became a model to other believers - and to us - on how to persevere; *"You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia"* (1 Thess 1:6-7).

Job said of his suffering; *"But he (God) knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10). Job endured the test and was blessed. The purpose of testing was to discover the state of his heart so that God could bless him.

This is demonstrated in God's dealings with the wilderness generation: *"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands"* (Deut 8:2).

God did this: *"to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you"* (Deut 8:16). God wanted to find out who among His people were wholehearted so it would go well with them. Sadly, the majority did not have pure hearts; therefore God could not bless them. The wilderness generation died in the desert apart from Joshua and Caleb who were wholehearted in their service to God.

God tests our hearts too - always with the purpose of blessing us for our faithfulness. When we experience testing times, let us remember they always have this purpose. It is a golden opportunity to show God we love Him with all our heart. As James 1:12 says; *'Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him'*.

Jesus is the greatest example of persevering under trial and loving God with wholehearted devotion. Hebrews 12 instructs us *'consider him [Jesus] who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart'* (v3).

Jesus' heart was tested time and again during his ministry. Ultimately, his love for God and for us led him to that cruel death on the cross.

God blessed Jesus for his pure heart. He raised him from the dead and *'exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'* (Phil 2:9-11).

As we come to break bread and drink wine let us truly consider what Jesus went through on our behalf.