

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE *Refined by God's Fire?*



The Question of God's Testing

As a young Christian, one of the questions I wrestled with the most was whether or not a loving God would test His people—being refined by God seemed painful and not at all like a good thing. I remember this question coming up constantly in my life. I often thought that God could not possibly be good if He allowed bad things to happen to the people He loved. For some reason, the idea of God allowing these difficult things felt evil to me.

The Danger of Comfort and False Theology

In places where Christians live freely and without much difficulty, a subtle but dangerous theology can sometimes emerge. Slowly, Christians in these places begin to believe that God's goodness is directly tied to their comfort. To a degree, this is true—God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. The danger comes when we start to think that God would never allow something bad to happen to us. We slowly start to believe that God would never test or refine us, and if He did, it would mean He isn't good. But the truth is, we are refined by God for our good and His glory.



The Biblical Call to Be Refined by God

People struggle because of a very common American cultural message: *You are perfect just the way you are.* At face value, this message feels positive, harmless, and, to some, even biblical. Unfortunately, it's not. At its core, the Good News of Jesus is the reality that we are broken and in desperate need of a Savior. The cultural message says, *You are perfect just the way you are, and you should never change.* The biblical message says, Jesus died for you just the way you are, but He desires and calls you to change. We are refined by God so that we may grow into the people He intends us to be.

Scripture's Emphasis on Refinement

The idea of God testing and refining us was an extremely common theme throughout Scripture. The message was clear: our good God will indeed allow difficulties and trials to come our way so that we can be tested and ultimately refined into the men and women He desires us to be. We are refined by God through our trials and challenges.



This idea is literally everywhere in Scripture. Just check out these verses: Job 23:10, Proverbs 17:3, Psalm 66:10, Zechariah 13:9, 1 Peter 1:6-7, and more.



Embracing Refinement as Proof of God's Love

The reality that God refines those whom He loves through difficulties and tests is woven throughout Scripture. And the message is always the same: God allows tests and difficulties for the sake of refining His people. We are refined by God, not abandoned by Him.

Brothers and sisters, God's refining in our lives is actually proof of His love for us! The writer of Hebrews says, "For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

God desires to refine us. He cares so deeply about our faith and character that He will absolutely allow trials, tests, and difficulties to come our way. We are refined by God so that we may be more like Christ.

Seeing Trials from God's Perspective

As we seek to live the Christian life, understanding God's desire to refine us is a foundational principle. If we don't grasp that God tests and disciplines those He loves, we will certainly end up seeing trials and difficulties the wrong way. We may see them as God abandoning us rather than refining us. But take note—these are not just different; they are opposites. God's refining activity shows that He cares, that He is close, and that He is at work—literally the opposite of abandoning us. These difficulties reveal His love and presence.



"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." (James 1:2-4)

