

Testing Them

by Tricia Berg

I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. Ecclesiastes 3:18

Solomon goes on to say that both animals and humans die. Hopefully we all know that we're all born with the sinful nature and subject to the penalty of death because of how we ALL use our free will to sin against God. (Gen. 2-3, Rom. 3:23, 6:23) However, we are NOT meant to behave like animals and indulge our flesh, despite being in a corruptible body. (Rom. 5:19, 1Cor. 15:50, Gal. 6:7-8, Eph. 4:17-24, 2Pet. 1:3-4, 2Pet. 2:19, Rom. 6:12-13, 1Pet. 1:14-19) Unlike animals, we're made in the image of God—we have the ability to reason. We can exercise self-control—especially if the Holy Spirit dwells in us (as believers). (Gal. 5:22-24, 1Cor. 9:25, Acts 24:25, 2Tim. 1:7, Titus 2:11-15, 3:3-8, 1Pet. 4:7, 2Pet. 1:5-11)

Unlike animals, we can set our minds on the eternal things of above. (Col. 3:2, Rom. 8:5-9, 1John 2:15-17) If we submit to HIS ways, He will help us believers to become more and more Christ-like from within. (Rom. 12:1-2, 1Cor. 15:45-49, Gal. 5:13-25, Eph. 4:20-24, 6:10-20, Col. 3:9-10, Rom. 6:17-22, John 8:34-36) If we choose instead to embrace our sinful nature and carnality (by hardening our hearts against God—loving our sin more than Him, such that we quench the Holy Spirit and eventually reject/discard His gift of faith), then He will let us go that way if we persistently insist upon it. (Rom. 1:18-32, Acts 17:29-31, 2Tim. 3:1-5, Heb. 3-4, Heb. 6, 10:26-39, Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 2:8-10, Deut. 30:6, Rom. 2:29, 2Thess. 2:9-12) It's not about "losing" salvation or about "working" for it or to keep it—it's about revealing who we really are—a washed, regenerated child of God who is led by HIS Spirit, bearing good fruit (and being grieved by sin and repenting upon slipping, which we ALL do), or someone who obeys and is still enslaved to their old nature and bearing its fruit of sin—behaving like a child of the devil. (1John 2:1-6, 3:4-10, Rom. 6) God didn't force us to believe, and He doesn't force us to obey Him. He prompts us to repentance through the Holy Spirit, but these days people take a pill to make that unpleasant feeling go away!

We can choose life or death. (John 3:36, Rom. 2:4-11, Eph. 5:5-6, Col. 3:5-7, 2Pet. 3, Rev. 21:8, 22:15) We will each answer for ourselves. (Gal. 6:4-5, 1John 5:18-21, Eph. 2:1-3, Heb. 4:12-13, Matt. 16:27, 2Cor. 5:9-10, Rev. 22:12) Let's not behave like animals instead of as beings created in the image of God. Let's humble ourselves and submit to God's perfect ways and will for us. (Jam. 4:4-10, 1Pet. 5:6-11, Rom. 13:8-14) Then we can look forward to the return of Jesus instead of fearing it. (2Tim. 4:8, 1Pet. 1:8-9, Heb. 10:36-39, 1John 2:26-28, Rev. 6:12-17, 19:11-21, Amos 5:18-20)

Solomon (the wisest man who ever lived - 1Kings 3:12, 4:29-34, 10:24 - in some but not all ways, he was a foreshadow of Jesus - Isa. 2:3-5, 1Kings 4:21, Isa. 60:11-12,

1Kings 10:1, 10, Matt. 12:42, Luke 11:31) concluded the book of Ecclesiastes by telling us the meaning of life in a nutshell. He also gave us a warning against false writings. (Please see my article "A Defense of Paul" for more on that topic.)

*The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.** Ecclesiastes 12:11-14 (Also see Rev. 22:12, Rom. 2:6-11, 13:8-14, 2Cor. 5:9-10, Matt. 16:25, Heb. 4:12-13, Col. 3:24-25.)*

related verses (to the verse at the top about beasts):

*But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and **they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them!** For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, **following their own sinful desires;** they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. Jude 1:10-16*

But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 2 Peter 2:12-14

*When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was **like a beast** toward you. Psalm 73:21-22 (See all of Psa. 73 and also Psa. 37.)*

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