

METAL

To my right is a blacksmith or a “smitty”. You probably remember seeing such an artisan at Stone Mountain, Fort Clinch, or other historic venues. The basic idea of hand forging is to heat the metal to a bright-red or workable state (approximately 1250°C), and hammer or beat the object into a tool, weapon or other item. But the primary reason for this letter is not discuss metal or metal-forming as much as to use the applications of metal-working for comparison to the human-working.



Isaiah 48:10 tells us: *See I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.* This scripture refers to a purification process whereby Egypt was the figurative iron-smelting furnace used to purify the Hebrews in preparation for their inheritance. Iron production evidently occurred during a period of at least 3000 years before Christ; the process involved tremendous heat to separate the iron from the ore, and the end-product from the raw material. Hardening iron, for such uses as weapons, also involved heat

The exact date at which people discovered the technique of smelting iron ore to produce usable metal is not known. The earliest iron implements discovered by archaeologists in Egypt date from about 3000BC, and iron ornaments were used even earlier; the comparatively advanced technique of hardening iron weapons by heat treatment was known to the Greeks about 1000 BC.

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treatment – again, that the end-product would be highly reliable and ready for action for the intended use. Iron ore is heated into wrought iron; and this iron along with carbon are heated to form steel.

The expression, *test your metal*, has some possible association to this purification and refining process from ore to steel; versed as a question, the expression is aimed at determining how reliable and ready for action someone or somebody is the task or test at hand. Even semi-finished metals, or items being machined into finish parts, must undergo heat treatment or tempering to soften the metal following machining. Tempering results in a decrease in hardness and strength and an increase in ductility and toughness. Time and temperature are critical to the outcome or desired condition of the end-product.

In your growth and development, God will *test your metal* just as he did in the Hebrew nation and in the Church of Acts. This process occurs through our lifetime and is aimed at preparing us for his service and his kingdom. *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another*