

# 2 Corinthians 13:5 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test? (NAU)

**Greek:** [Heautous peirazete](#) (2PPAM) [ei este](#) (2PPAI) [en te pistei](#). [hautous dokimazete](#): (2PPAM) [e ouk epiginoskete](#) (2PPAI) [hautous hoti lesous Christos en humin? ei meti adokimoi este](#). (2PPAI)

**Amplified:** Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Keep testing yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Keep proving yourselves. Or do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you—unless in any way you are rejected?

**ESV:** Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

**KJV:** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

**NIV:** Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?

**NKJV:** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.

**NLT:** Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** You should be looking at yourselves to make sure that you are really Christ's. It is yourselves that you should be testing, not me. You ought to know by this time that Christ is in you, unless you are not real Christians at all. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Be putting yourselves to the test whether you are in the Faith. Be putting yourselves to the test for the purpose of approving yourselves, and finding that you meet the specifications, put your approval upon yourselves. Or, do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are those who are disapproved?

**Young's Literal:** Your own selves try ye, if ye are in the faith; your own selves prove ye; do ye not know your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, if ye be not in some respect disapproved of?

**TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH:** [Heautous peirazete](#) (2PPAM) [ei este](#) (2PPAI) [en te pistei](#):

- **Examine:** Ps 17:3 26:2 119:59 139:23,24 La 3:40 Eze 18:28 Hag 1:5,7 1Co 11:28,31 Ga 6:4 Heb 4:1 12:15 1Jn 3:20,21 Rev 2:5 3:2,3) (**in the faith:** Col 1:23 2:7 1Ti 2:15 Tit 1:13 2:2 1Pe 5:9)

## TWO APPROACHES TO INTERPRETATION OF 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

The more I have studied this passage, the more I have come to realize that it was not as "straightforward" as I had originally presumed. In simple terms, there are two schools of interpretation ([but see S Lewis Johnson's "hybrid" interpretation which seems to overlap with #1 and #2](#)):

(1) Paul is commanding the church to perform a self-examination to determine whether they were true believers, with the implication being that some might not be genuine believers. In other words this view holds that Paul is calling on his readers to examine their **once-for-all justification**

(2) Paul was speaking to believers only and not telling them to examine themselves for evidence of salvation but for evidence of their **ongoing sanctification**. ([See explanation of this approach](#)).

**Perry Brown** (in his Bib Sac Article - [What Is the Meaning of "Examine Yourself" in 2 Corinthians 13:5?](#)) **summarizes the two interpretations...**

Those who affirm the eternal security of the believer in Christ generally hold one of two popular interpretations of 2 Corinthians 13:5.

(1) **The Reformed view** assumes that Paul was addressing the possibility that some in the Corinthian church were not genuine believers—even though they claimed to be—and that Paul challenged them to test whether they had ever truly been born again. Therefore today those who profess Christ as Savior should examine themselves to be sure they really are Christians. MacArthur represents this view.

Doubts about one's salvation are not wrong so long as they are not nursed and allowed to become an obsession. Scripture encourages self-examination. Doubts must be confronted and dealt with honestly and biblically. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul wrote, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" That admonition is largely ignored—and often explained away—in the contemporary church. (John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel according to Jesus* - Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, 190. Two other times in this book MacArthur refers to this verse to support the view that Christians should examine themselves to determine the validity of their conversion)

**Buswell** also supports the Reformed view and applies this verse when the behavior of a professing believer does not evidence an obedient walk with Christ.

But my point is that so long as a professing Christian is in the state of carnality, no pastor, no Christian friend, has the slightest ground for holding that this carnal person has ever been regenerated. We are not to judge in the sense of pronouncing eternal destiny. God's judgments are inscrutable. Nevertheless, it is a pastor's duty to counsel such a person. "You do not give evidence of being in a regenerate state. You must remember Paul's warning, 'Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? You are not reprobate, are you?' (2Corinthians 13:5)." (James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:147) ([See related article by Sam Storms](#)).

(2) A second view of 2 Corinthians 13:5 is that Paul was not doubting the Corinthians' salvation, but was calling them to examine the quality of their walk with Christ. In other words Paul was addressing their **ongoing sanctification**, not their **once-for-all justification**.

**Hodges** represents this interpretation.

Thus the statement, "Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" has no more to do with the question of salvation than the words "in the faith" [v. 5a ]. What Paul has described of his own experience shows that he is thinking of Jesus Christ being in himself, or in the Corinthians, in a dynamic, active and vital sense. In the language of the Apostle John this could be expressed in terms of the abiding life, where the disciple is in Christ, and Christ is in the disciple, in a dynamic, fruit-bearing relationship (see John 15:1-8; 14:19-24 ). (Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege* - Dallas, TX: Viva, 1992, 112)

**[EDITORIAL ADDITION - HERE IS A REFUTATION OF HODGES VIEW ON 2 Corinthians 13:5 FROM WAYNE GRUDEM'S 2016 BOOK "[FREE GRACE" THEOLOGY: 5 WAYS IT DIMINISHES THE GOSPEL](#)** (available in Logos). - This verse poses a challenge for Free Grace advocates because they do not think it appropriate to tell regular churchgoers who profess to be Christians that they should "examine themselves" to find out if they are really born again or not. That comes too close to saying that good works are a necessary result of saving faith, which is contrary to Free Grace teaching. Therefore Hodges says that 2 Corinthians 13:5 is not a challenge to the churchgoers at Corinth to test whether they are, in fact, born-again Christians. It is rather a challenge to test whether they are "living in a dynamic, faith-oriented connection with Jesus Christ." (Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 201.) In other words, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith" means to examine yourselves to see whether you are living a dynamic Christian life. (Similarly, Dillow says that in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Salvation is not in view at all." Dillow, *Final Destiny*, 452.) Hodges supports this interpretation with reference to other verses about standing fast "in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13) or being "sound in the faith" (Titus 1:13). But other verses that talk about the condition of one's life "in the faith" should not be equated with 2 Corinthians 13:5, where Paul is talking

about whether they are “in the faith” at all. And Hodges completely fails to account for the fact that in the second half of the same verse, the test that Paul is seeking from them is further explained as finding out whether “Jesus Christ is in you,” and Paul says Jesus is not in them if they “fail to meet the test.” Surely the entire verse is talking about whether they are born-again Christian believers or not.]

**Lowery** takes a similar position on this verse .

Paul’s question is usually construed with regard to positional justification: were they Christians or not? But it more likely concerned practical sanctification: did they demonstrate that they were in the faith (cf. 1Cor 16:13) and that Christ was in them by their obeying His will? To stand the test was to do what was right. To fail was to be disobedient and therefore subject to God’s discipline. The words fail(ed) the test (2Cor 13:5, 6) and failed (2Cor 13:7 ) render the Greek word *adokimoi* (“disapproved”; cf. *adokimos* in 1Cor 9:27). ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

There are some variations on these two basic interpretations but this simple description is adequate for our purposes.

**William MacDonald** (who I highly respect) writes that...

Verse 5 is often misused to teach that we should look within ourselves for assurance of salvation, but this could lead to discouragement and doubt. Assurance of salvation comes first and foremost through the word of God. The moment we trust Christ we can know on the authority of the Bible that we have been born again. As time goes on, we do find other evidences of the new life—a new love for holiness, a new hatred of sin, love of the brethren, practical righteousness, obedience, and separation from the world. But Paul is not telling the Corinthians to engage in self-examination as a proof of their salvation. Rather he is asking them to find in their salvation a proof of his apostleship. There were only two possibilities: either Jesus Christ was in them, or they were disqualified, spurious. The word translated **disqualified** was used to describe metals which, when tested, were found to be false. So the Corinthians were either true believers, or they were **disqualified** by failure to pass the test. (**Ed**: I wish he had expounded on from what they were *disqualified*? As I explain below, the Greek word for "fail the test" is *adokimos* and is used in the NT to describe believers and unbelievers) ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Hampton Keathley III** favors the second interpretation and gives a fairly simple (easy to understand) explanation of the reasoning used by those who favor 2 Cor 13:5 as a passage directed solely to believers...

Sometimes a passage like 2 Corinthians 13:5 is used to support the necessity of examining our works to prove our salvation. This is unfortunate because this is mere proof-texting and misses the context and the actual meaning and purpose of this passage in the argument of Paul in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless, indeed, you fail the test!

**MacArthur** is an illustration of this. He writes: “Doubts about one’s salvation are not wrong so long as they are not nursed and allowed to become an obsession. Scripture encourages self-examination. Doubts must be confronted and dealt with honestly and biblically.”

Then, after quoting 2 Corinthians 13:5 he concludes, “That admonition is largely ignored—and often explained away—in the contemporary church.”<sup>11</sup>

But is this the correct interpretation of this passage? Is Paul calling these believers to examine themselves for the purpose of assurance of salvation? The context says no! The following are some reasons for this position:

(1) Again, as in 1 Corinthians, Paul affirmed his conviction they were saved. He does not question their salvation for a moment as is clear from the passages mentioned above.

(2) Even if Paul were telling them to examine themselves for assurance, he does not tell them to examine their works for assurance. In light of the plain teaching of Scripture, if anything needed to be examined, it would be the object of their faith. Had they truly trusted in Christ rather than in some system of works?

(3) He does tell them to examine themselves, but he had another purpose in mind according to the context of verses 2Co 13:3-7. Some were questioning the validity of the ministry of the apostle because of the influence of certain false teachers. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:1-12:21 where the apostle defends his ministry against their accusations. They were demanding proof in verse 3 that Christ was speaking through Paul. In verse 5 Paul shows them that the proof they were looking for was in themselves because he had been their father in the faith. ([Assurance of Salvation](#)) ([Charles Hodge also adopts this approach - see 2Corinthians 13](#))

[Commentary](#))

**Constable** echoes **Keathley** writing that...

This verse may at first seem to be talking about gaining assurance of one's salvation from his or her works. However this was not what Paul advocated here or anywhere else in his writings. Remember that he was writing to genuine believers (2Co 1:1, 21, 22; 3:2, 3; 6:14; 8:9). He told them to examine their works to gain assurance that they were experiencing sanctification, that they were walking in obedience to the faith. ([2 Corinthians Commentary Notes](#))

**William Kelly** agrees with Keathley...

It helps greatly to the understanding of what follows to see that, whether marked externally or not, there is a parenthesis after the first clause of the third verse which runs through the fourth also; so that the connection of the first clause of verse 3 is really with verse 5. **Since ye seek a proof of the Christ speaking in me, ... try your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves."**

It is a final notice of and answer to their unworthy questioning of Paul's apostleship. Did they demand a proof of Christ speaking in him? Were not they themselves proof enough? Had He not spoken to their souls in that servant of His who first caused His voice to be heard in Corinth? As surely as they were in the faith, which they did not at all question, he was an apostle — if not to others, assuredly to them. The many Corinthians who, hearing the apostle, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, were the last who ought to gainsay the messenger if they appreciated the message and Him who sent the messenger. If they were reprobate, having confessed Christ in vain, there was no force in the appeal, which derives all its power from their confidence that Christ was in them as the fruit of the apostle's preaching.

This also shows how baseless is the too common abuse of the passage, as well as of 1Corinthians 11: 28, to sanction a doubting self-examination, as one often hears, not only in the practical history of souls, but in the teaching of doctrinal schools otherwise opposed. Here, say they, we are taught to search ourselves and see that we be not too confident: does not the apostle in the first Epistle to the Corinthians call on each habitually to examine or prove himself before partaking of the Lord's Supper? and does he not pursue that special call by the general exhortation in the second Epistle to examine or try themselves whether they be in the faith? The truth is that an examination of the context in each case dispels the error as to both — an error which strikes directly at the peace of the believer, if not also the truth of the gospel. For the gospel is sent by God, founded on the personal glory and the work of His Son, to bring the believer into communion with the Father and the Son in full liberty of heart and with a purged conscience. These misinterpretations, under cover of jealousy for holiness, tend immediately to plunge the soul into doubt through questions about itself. ([2 Corinthians Commentary](#))

**F B Hole...**

Paul's authority as an apostle had however been questioned, and the Corinthians had very foolishly given ear to these questionings. They were the last persons who should have done so, or should have had any doubts as to whether Christ had spoken through him. Since they had entertained such doubts, some kind of answer was needed, and a very crushing one Paul was able to give. He had simply to say, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Since they were his converts, the fruit of his labour, they themselves were the proof — unless indeed they were reprobates, just worthless frauds. If they were but frauds then indeed Christ might not have spoken in Paul; but if they were true men He most certainly had.

Verse 5 has sometimes been taken apart from its context and turned into a plea for continual self-inspection, and even doubt as to one's own salvation. This is because the parenthesis extending from the middle of verse 3 (2Co 13:3) to the end of verse 4 (2Co 13:4) has not been noticed. If we connect the early part of verse 3 with verse 5 the sense is quite clear. There is again a touch of irony in Paul's words, for the doubts they had foolishly entertained as to Christ speaking in him really recoiled upon their own heads. **If indeed Christ had not spoken in Paul then — since they had professed conversion under his speaking — Christ would not be found in them. But if Christ was indeed found in them it was conclusive proof that Christ had spoken in him.**

(**Ed:** Notice how F B Hole "leaves open the door" for interpretation number one when he writes...) **It is quite possible of course that in speaking thus the Apostle wished to convey to them the fact that he was not too sure of the genuineness of some of them, and thereby he desired to stir them up and exercise their consciences. At the same time he was quite confident as to the majority of them.**

This is evident if we consider the parenthesis, the first words of which tell us that Christ had not been "weak" toward them but rather "mighty in you." Looking back to the work that had been wrought when first he came among them, Paul was full of confidence that the power of Christ had been in it. The whole path of Christ on earth had been characterized by a "weakness" which culminated in His crucifixion. Yet He is alive in resurrection by the power of God. Now that which marked the path of the great Master marked also the path of the servant, who was following in His life and way. Weakness also characterized the external life and service of the Apostle but under the surface the power of God was vitally present with him. ([2 Corinthians Commentary](#))

**Dr. S Lewis Johnson** former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary offers somewhat of a **hybrid interpretation**" that is not incompatible with interpretations ([#1](#)) and ([#2](#)) above ...

The apostle now turns to the necessity of self-examination. He states in the fifth verse, "Test yourselves to see if you're in the faith. Examine yourselves." They had been testing him. He turns the table on them and twice and emphatically says, "Test yourselves." He uses that word in the emphatic position twice, "Yourselves test," "Test yourselves."

Now in stating this it's very plain why he says that. If they fail the test, they have no right to blame the apostle for anything. If they're not believers, if they fail the test and they don't even belong to the Lord, what right do they have to criticize an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ?

And turning it on the other side, if they pass the test, how can they blame the apostle because the apostle is the one who brought them the knowledge that they claim that they have. So the apostle has them on the horns of a dilemma.

**The irony is obvious, if they pass they cannot blame Paul,  
if they fail they cannot blame Paul.**

The fact that they are a Christian Assembly is testimony ultimately to the faithfulness and the authenticity of the preaching of the Apostle Paul. So if they fail, they cannot blame him. If they pass, they cannot blame the evangelist who brought them to the condition in which they are passing the test. (Ed: This interpretation is more in line with interpretation [#2](#)).

(Ed: Now Dr. Johnson seems to apply 2Cor 13:5 in a manner that is more in keeping with interpretation [#1](#))

When we say, "**Test ourselves or examine yourselves**," we're saying something that we need in the United States of America, and in fact, in the Western world.

**There are literally millions of professing Christians  
who need to pay attention to this statement of the apostle.**

They have entered into a shallow commitment to Christianity, they've joined the church, they've been baptized or they've done other things that might make them think that they are genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They've been encouraged to think that, by men who've not been careful to point out that there is more to becoming a Christian than subscribing to a statement.

**They don't hate sin.**

**They don't love holiness.**

**They do not pray.**

**They do not study the word of God.**

**They do not walk humbly with God.**

(Ed comment: Could Christ be in such individuals? I think not!)

These individuals, so many of them stand in the same danger in which the Corinthians stood. And the apostle's words, "Test yourselves to see if your in the faith, examine yourselves," are valid words that each of us should ponder. ([The Place of Self-Examination - 2 Corinthians 13:1-14](#))

**Let me digress for a moment** Keep in mind that while Scripture has only one true **interpretation** (regardless of the disagreements among scholars), Scripture can have a number of legitimate **applications**, and it is this latter aspect which the reader should not "jettison" (because he espouses interpretation [#2](#)) in regard to the truth taught in 2 Corinthians 13:5. As I have studied numerous writers' interpretations of 2Cor 13:5, it seems clear that at least some of those writers object to anyone ever even questioning another person's justification. One of those writers (Zane Hodges) has gone so far as to say that if a person professes faith in Christ and then spends the remainder of their life in disobedience (and sin), they are still justified (and eternally secure) based on their

original profession. This seems to be a deceptive and dangerous viewpoint, for if one carefully examines the NT, especially James 2, there is a clear association of one's works with one's faith (**See related notes on assessing the genuineness of one's faith** (Jas 2:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 - **see study notes on Jas 2:14; 2:15; 2:16; 2:17; 2:18; 2:19; 2:20; 2:21; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24; 2:25; 2:26**).

**Without question, faith alone in Christ alone  
is fully sufficient for salvation.**

However, according to James, that faith in Christ which effects a genuine regeneration of the individual's spirit is a faith which shows itself to be real by the resulting God glorifying fruit or works. For more on this topic see the study of James chapter 2 referenced in the preceding paragraph. To say that one should not even **apply** Paul's admonition to **test yourselves** as to the authenticity of one's faith is in my humble opinion a potentially dangerous teaching. Why do I say that? Because Jesus teaches that there will be "**many**" (not few, not some, but many) who are deceived into thinking that they are genuinely born again, when in fact they are not. In one of the most sobering passages in all of Scripture Jesus unapologetically, unambivalently, unequivocally, irrevocably states the soul piercing truth that...

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **Many** (Don't miss this "quantization" by the omniscient Lord Who sees into every man's heart) will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

**Comment:** I propose that Paul's charge in 2Corinthians 13:5 lends itself to a fair and legitimate **application** to call others to take a personal spiritual inventory, and that, far from being judgmental or condemning, such an application of the text is in fact (when done with the right heart motive) one of the most loving, "Jesus-like" questions/warnings we can ever speak forth in this present life! To remain silent, when we have legitimate, Biblically-based reasons to question the veracity and authenticity of the salvation of a relative or acquaintance, is not only unloving but in light of Jesus' words, even **unconscionable!** We as believers are given the privilege to be salt and light in the midst of a spiritually corrupt, dead and dying world, and to not fulfill our calling, is tantamount to rank disobedience to our Master's command to...

Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you** (note how "James-like" Jesus is, clearly linking **being** with **doing!** What we **are** and what we **do** are inseparably related according to Jesus! It follows that the only way to assess the authenticity of a disciple is by what they do. E.g., take Judas who masqueraded as a "true" disciple!); and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt 28:19, 20)

**Perry Brown** who was quoted earlier has an interesting anecdotal story writing that...

"the passage (2Cor 13:5) raises the practical question of whether a Christian should periodically examine whether he or she is truly saved. For example a boy known to this writer was baptized at nine years of age. Over a decade later, after hearing an evangelist preach from 2 Corinthians 13:5, the boy expressed doubts about his salvation as a child. He then told this writer he trusted Christ as his Savior for the first time after listening to the evangelist preach on 2 Corinthians 13:5. But did the evangelist use this passage the way the apostle Paul meant it?"

**Comment:** While I am not sure how the evangelist used the passage, the more important question is did the Spirit use the preaching of the truth in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to bring about genuine regeneration? Brown seems to suggest that may have been the case. Assuming that it is the case, I would propose that while I agree that the most accurate interpretation of 2 Corinthians 13:5 is interpretation **#2** (which I had heretofore not fully appreciated), that interpretation does not exclude the application of the principle of testing of one's faith for authenticity. How else could one make the distinction John calls for in 1Jn 3:10 (where one "test" is whether one practices [present tense] righteousness as their general lifestyle)? As discussed above, James also is clearly calling for "testing" of one's faith in Jas 2:14-26. And as discussed elsewhere Jesus' warning in Mt 7:21, 22, 23 clearly shows the importance that one be absolutely sure that they are **in the faith** and that they are not deceived professors (like those in Titus 1:16). Clearly men can be deceived, thinking their faith is genuine, when it is not and the New Testament is filled with passages that warn of this deadly deception. For example study 1Cor 6:9, 10, 11, Gal 5:21, Eph 5:6, James 1:26, 1Jn 3:7, 8, 9)

**Now let's look at the context for 2 Cor 13:5:** Keep in mind that in the last section of this second epistle to the church at Corinth



(2Cor 10:1-13:14), Paul's aim is to defend his apostolic authority and ministry. As **Criswell** phrases it Paul "concludes with a vigorous defense of the legitimacy of his apostleship and a stern warning that he will deal personally with any troublemakers upon his arrival (Chap. 10-13)."

This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. 2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare (treat leniently) anyone, 3 **since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me** and who is not weak toward you, but **mighty in you**. 4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power (**dunamis [word study]** = in context supernatural/divinely dispensed inherent capability) of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power (dunamis) of God directed toward you. (2Co 13:1, 2, 3, 4)

**Comment:** Notice Paul's testimony that "**Christ... speaks in me**" which emphasizes his personal assurance that Christ is indeed **in** him. He also assures the believers in Corinth that this same Christ is in them, as evidenced by His mighty power. This description prepares his readers for the strong warning in the present passage that they need to make sure that Christ (and His mighty power) is indeed **in** them! In view of the fact that Paul states that he will come again (2Co 13:2 is more accurately not "**if**" but "**when**" he comes) at which time he would not spare any who were continuing in sin, he commands his readers to examine themselves to make sure every one of them was truly **in the faith**.

**Scott Hafemann** adds that "Like the prophets of the old covenant, Paul thus announces the coming judgment in advance in order to bring about the repentance of those who are truly God's people (cf. 2Co 10:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). He does so by calling the rebellious in Corinth "to examine" or "test themselves" to see if they are truly "in the faith" (2Co 13:5)." (Hafemann, Scott J. The NIV application commentary: 2 Corinthians, Zondervan Publishing House)

**Henry Alford** paraphrases Paul's logic "You want to prove Christ speaking in me: -- if you necessitate this proof, it will be given. But I will tell you whom rather to prove, Prove YOURSELVES; there let your attention be concentrated, if you will apply tests." ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

**Spurgeon** referred to 2Co 13:5 as...

**a solemn text,  
that we cannot preach too impressively,  
or too frequently meditate.**

The Corinthians were the critics of the apostles' age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language, and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning—they began to criticize the apostle Paul. They criticized his style. "His letters," say they, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." Nay, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his apostleship, and for once in his life, the apostle Paul found himself compelled to "become a fool in glorying; for," says he, "you have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." The apostle wrote two letters to them; in both he is compelled to upbraid them while he defends himself, and when he had fully disarmed his opponents, and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying,

**"Examine yourselves.' You have disputed my doctrine; examine whether you be in the faith. You have made me prove my apostleship; 'prove your own selves.' Use the powers which you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters."**...

... And here let me appeal to each person now present.

Do not tell me that you are an old church member; I am glad to hear it; but still, I beseech you, examine yourself, for a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years, and yet there may come a trial-day, when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten bough of the forest.

Tell me not you are a deacon: that you may be, and yet you may be damnably deceived.

Ay, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My brethren in the ministry.—we may lay aside our cassocks (**Ed**: clerical clothing = an ankle-length robe worn by clerics) to wear belts of flame in hell; we may go from our pulpit, having preached to others what we never knew ourselves, and have to join the everlasting wailings of

souls we have helped to delude.

May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms, and say,

**"I need not examine myself,"**

for there is not a man here, or anywhere, who has not good cause to test and try himself today. **Ed: Amen and Amen!** ([Self-Examination](#) or [listen to the audio](#))

**Test yourselves** - In context, this implies that they were testing the authenticity of Paul as an apostle (he did not fail the test 2Co 13:6) and failing to test themselves as to the authenticity of their conversion! In a sense the church at Corinth had put Paul to the test, a test to which he responded to in 2Co 11:16-12:6. Now it is their "turn for a test"!

**Jamieson** agrees writing that what Paul is saying is...

prove your own selves-This should be your first aim, rather than "seeking a proof of Christ speaking in me" (2Co 13:3).

**David Guzik** - Paul asks the Corinthian Christians to consider a sobering question: **"Am I really a Christian?"** We are rightly concerned that every believer have the [assurance of salvation](#), and know how to endure the attacks that come from Satan in this area. **At the same time, we also understand that there are some who assume or presume they are Christians when they are not.** It is a challenge to all (**Ed:** To all who call themselves "Christian"). ([2 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Yourselves** - This pronoun is first in the Greek sentence emphasizing that the readers (including you and I) needed to focus not as much on others as on themselves (ourselves!). How tempting it is to "test" others in our church but blindly fail to see the need to test ourselves. Paul's admonition reminds one of Jesus' warning concerning judging in His Sermon on the Mount...

Do not **judge** (the **present imperative** with a negative implies this was taking place) lest you be judged. (**Now Jesus amplifies His warning on why we had better be very careful when we judge!**) For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?" You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Mt 7:1, 2+, Mt 7:3, 4, 5+)

**Comment:** This was my children's favorite verse when they were still at home. "Dad, the Bible says not to judge!" It is vitally important for the health of the church to realize what Jesus is **not** saying in this passage. He is not saying judgment has no place in our homes (or in the church) but that such judgment must be carried out with pure hearts and motives and with due caution, for ultimately only God sees the heart, all the facts and all the circumstances behind the actions of others. **John Wesley** told the story of a man for whom initially he had little respect because he judged him to be guilty of a miserly and covetous heart. On one occasion when this man contributed only a pittance to what Wesley deemed a worthy charity, the famous preacher openly criticized him. Afterwards, the judged man went to Wesley privately and related that he had been living on [parsnips](#) and water for several weeks. He went on to explain that before his conversion, he had run up a considerable amount of debt. Now, by skimping on everything and buying nothing for himself he was slowly paying off his creditors one at a time. The man went on to tell Wesley

Christ has made me an honest man, and so with all these debts to pay, I can give only a few offerings above my tithe. I must settle up with my worldly neighbors and show them what the **grace of God** can do in the **heart** of a man who was once dishonest.

Wow! Talk about a piercing Wesley's heart! Clearly convicted of his own judgmental spirit, the contrite Wesley apologized to the man, and sought his forgiveness (a good example for all of us to emulate, as we all fall into this easy trap of judging the actions, words and/or deeds of others).

From the context it is clear that Christ is warning us not to judge the motives behind the actions of others, because their motives are usually hidden from us. We must attempt to put the best reasonable interpretation upon what they say and do, and not judge their hearts, for such judgment belongs solely to the omnipotent God. However, we are called to judge doctrines and deeds.

**David Guzik** - We are often very ready to **examine** and **test** others. But first, and always first, we must examine and test ourselves. "That was the trouble at Corinth. They criticized Paul and failed to examine themselves." (Redpath) ([2 Corinthians 13](#))



**Homer Kent** - The word “**yourselves**” is emphatic in both statements; the idea is, “**Yourselves** be testing ... **yourselves** be proving.” Paul was aware that the Corinthians had been clamoring for him to prove himself (2Co 13:3). They should have been more concerned about themselves. Paul asks the Corinthians to test themselves regarding “**the faith**,” that is, the Christian faith. Were they true Christians? Did they really recognize that Christ Jesus was dwelling in them and had brought new life? Surely they would acknowledge these things to be true. The only alternative was to fail the test, and Paul did not consider this at all likely. ([A Heart Opened Wide: Studies in 2 Corinthians](#))

**C K Barrett** introduces his comments on this verse noting that "It seems clear that the Corinthians have been testing Paul and other claimants to apostolic status, and that Paul is at least in some-danger of being rejected, as a much less impressive missionary than others who have taken greater care to make their qualifications and merits known. He now replies that the Corinthians have been testing the wrong persons; they should test themselves. ( Black's New Testament commentary: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1973)

**Butler** quips "If these Corinthians want Paul to prove his calling, let them also prove their conversion. The believers in Corinth need to do some personal examining as well as examining of Paul. Can they prove they are believers? They need to prove it to themselves. In fact, all professing believers need to examine their own hearts to make sure they are actually believers and not pretenders. (Analytical Bible Expositor: I & II Corinthians)

It is worth noting that **test** (**peirazo**) is in the **present imperative** which is a command calling for continual attention. Interesting! A word of caution is in order here, for Paul is in no way attempting to undermine the doctrine of assurance of salvation or the doctrine of eternal security. He certainly is not implying that one can lose their salvation and that because of that possibility they need to continually be testing themselves to make sure they have not lost it! To the contrary, the old adage is true -- "**Once saved, always saved!**" (Assuming the initial salvation is genuine!)

Surely this command is not necessary for those who are in the modern evangelical church in America. If you believe that statement, then read **Charles Colson's** pithy words (circa 1990)

    Pollsters tell us that 50 million Americans say they are **born again**. Evangelicals have come out of the closet in recent years, accompanied by a surge of Christian books, records, celebrities and candidates. No doubt about it, religion is up. But so are values unremittingly opposed to the truth of Christianity: One out of every two marriages shatters in divorce; one out of three pregnancies terminates in abortion. Homosexuality is no longer considered depravity, but an “alternative lifestyle.” Crime continues to soar—in “Christian” America there are 100 times more burglaries than in “pagan” Japan. That is the great paradox today: **Sin abounds** in the midst of **unprecedented religiosity**. If **there are so many of us**, why are we not affecting our world?

**Comment:** Excellent question, which in turn begs the corollary question "**Are there really so many of us?**" The answer would seem to be simple - either there are not truly so many (i.e., many profess Christ but do not truly possess Christ!) or there are so many whose "salt" is not very salty (Mt 5:13-note) and whose "lamp" is dirty, dimmed and/or hidden (cf Mt 5:14, 15, 16-note)!

**Guzik** - To (test) yourself, in fact, is to submit to the examination and scrutiny of Jesus Christ the Lord - and this never to fix attention on sin but on Christ - and to ask Him to reveal that which in you grieves His Spirit; to ask Him to give you grace that it might be put away and cleansed in His precious blood." Self examination "takes the chill away from your soul, it takes the hardness away from your heart, it takes the shadows away from your life, it sets the prisoner free." (Redpath) ([2 Corinthians 13](#))

**Adam Clarke** - Try yourselves; pierce your hearts; bore yourselves throughout; try yourselves by what I have written, and see whether ye retain the true faith of the Gospel.

**Test** (3985) (**peirazo** from the noun **peira** = test from **peiro** = perforate, pierce through to test durability of things) is a morally neutral word simply meaning “to test”. Whether the **test** is for a good (as it proved to be in Heb 11:17) or evil (Mt 4:1 "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil*") depends on the intent of the one giving the test and also on the response of the one tested. **Peirazo** can have several nuances depending on the **context**: (1) trials with a beneficial purpose and effect (In the present passage Paul is calling for his readers to try or test themselves), (2) divinely permitted or sent, (3) with a good or neutral significance, (4) of a varied character, (5) definitely designed to lead to wrong doing, temptation (always Satan's purpose), (6) of men trying or challenging God.

**Swanson** says that **peirazo** (Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains) as used in the present passage means...

    To examine, submit another to a test, to learn the true nature or character of. To endeavor to discover the nature or character of something by testing. (2Co 13:5, 1Co 10:13-note) This use can refer to a trial of God by humans, the intent being to **put God to the test**, to discover whether God really can do a certain thing.

**J Vernon McGee** applied this verse in his own family explaining first that...

This has nothing to do with free will or election or the security of the believer. Paul says we should examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith or not. We should be willing to face up to this issue. I think two or three times a year we should do this.

When my daughter was just a little thing, she made a confession of her faith to her mother when they were back visiting her grandmother in Texas. She came in one day and said out of a clear sky that she wanted to accept Jesus as her Savior. My wife took her into the bedroom, she got down on her knees and accepted Christ. Regularly after that I would ask her about her relation to Christ. When she got into her teens, she asked, "Daddy, why do you keep asking me whether I am a Christian or not or whether I really trust in Jesus?" I told her, "I just want to make sure. After all, you are my offspring and I want to be sure." Now not only did I do that for her, I did it for myself also. I think every believer ought to do that.

(In his comments on James, Dr McGee adds) One of the greatest dangers for us preachers of the gospel is that we like to see people converted, and we are willing to accept a brazen and flippant yes from some individual who says, "Yes, I'll trust Jesus." However, it might be just an impertinent, impudent, and insolent nod of the head; it is so easy today to be as phony as a three-dollar bill.

(In his comments on 2Peter 1:9,10, Dr McGee reminds us) If you have the idea that you can live a careless life and still be a Christian and know it, you are wrong. It is impossible. You may be a Christian, but you sure won't know it. Many years ago a young preacher in Cannon Beach, Oregon, said to me one evening, "There are many Christians who believe in the **security** of the believer, but they do not have the **assurance** of their salvation." You see, the security of the believer is objective; the assurance of salvation is subjective.

(In comments on Deuteronomy 9) I believe that the believer is **secure**. But I also believe and preach the **insecurity** of the **make-believer**. There are a lot of **make-believers**. We need to search our hearts, every one of us (**Ed**: Our pray as David did - Ps 139:23-[note](#), Ps 139:24-[note](#)).

(In comments on the story of Simon in Acts 8:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) This man Simon had all the outward trappings. He answered that he did believe in Jesus, and so he was baptized. But it was not a genuine faith. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding and italics added)

Regarding whether or not his readers are **in the faith**, **Criswell** makes an important point noting that...

**This verse is not intended to rob believers of the assurance and security of their salvation** It is, however, intended as a warning to those who would follow false teaching and adopt a lifestyle that is inconsistent with the message of reconciliation (cf. 2Co 12:20, 21). To persist in either activity is a cause for serious introspection and a testing to see whether or not one is truly "**in the faith**." ([Criswell, W A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

**Spurgeon** says...

#### **"Examine yourselves"**

Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly.

**"Examine:" that is a scholastic idea.** A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master puts him through his paces—questions him, to see whether he has made any progress,—whether he knows anything. Christian, catechize your heart; question it, to see whether it has been growing in grace; question it, to see if it knows anything of vital Godliness or not. Examine it: pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it does know and what it does not know, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

**Again: it is a military idea.** "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions, and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review—day is not content with merely surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accouterments, so do you look well to yourselves; examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care.

**And once again, this is a legal idea.** "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him, or, as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark: never was there a rogue less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart, and as when you are cross-examining a dishonest person—one that has bye—ends to serve, you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie, so do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way; for if there be a loophole for escape, if there be any presence for self—deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will be ready enough to avail itself of it.

**And yet once more: this is a traveler's idea.** I find in the original, it has this meaning: "Go right through yourselves." As a traveler, if he has to write a book upon a country, is not content to go round its borders merely, but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hill top, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine: he goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he trace it to the spring whence it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its bowels. Now, do the same with your heart. "Examine yourselves." Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow rill till you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. "Examine yourselves." This is a very big word—a word that needs thinking over; and I am afraid there be very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation ([Self-Examination](#))

**Jonathan Edwards**, by many the greatest theologian in American history, interpreted 2 Corinthians 13:5 as follows

All men should be much concerned to know whether they do not live in some way of sin. DAVID was much concerned to know this concerning himself. He searched himself. He examined his own heart and ways. But he did not trust to that. He was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him which had escaped his notice. Therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." (Ps 139:23-24, Ed: See also Ps 26:2 = three "staccato like" commands in Hebrew begging for God to examine him!) He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a state of sin. All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin. Every unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. **We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Savior. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians.** 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved. (from [The Necessity of Self-Examination](#))

**Comment** - See similar [article by Hannah More entitled "Self Examination"](#) - there are a number of questions at the end of this article. While I think they are good, they are a bit "intense," and we must remember that we are under grace, not law. Thus these questions should be used as benchmarks, not whipping posts! Fleshly attempts (reliance on our natural strength of the fallen nature) to conform strictly to questions such as these can engender a spirit of legalism if we are not careful! So, yes, we should examine ourselves, but we should be cautious not to drift into legalism. The only way we can truly conform to these questions is by the enabling power of the Spirit of grace! Yes, we are responsible to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, but we can only do so by the energizing power of the Spirit Who gives us the desire and the power to live in a manner pleasing to the Father (Study Php 2:12+, Php 2:13+). So let us examine ourselves, but doing so keeping these caveats in mind, lest we fall into the subtle trap of legalism (and it can be very subtle beloved!)

Clearly Edwards espoused not a morbid but a healthy self-examination of the integrity (or lack of integrity) of one's faith as deduced from the 76 questions listed below, questions that we would all do well to review from time to time. We go to doctors for annual physical examinations, for we are concerned for the longevity our bodies, but we sadly too often we are loathe to go to the Great Physician for an annual spiritual examination, to assess the state of our souls! This ought not to be the case! ([See his questions below](#) taken from "[The Necessity of Self-Examination](#)" available free online)

**David Garland** writes that "**Faith**" here does not refer simply to trust in Christ, which is its primary meaning in Paul's usage, but to the whole Christian way and truth (see Titus 1:13; 2:2). It is not a matter of examining their doctrines, however, but of bringing their conduct and thinking into conformity with their belief in Christ. (The New American Commentary)

**The faith** - Notice that in this context "the faith" is a specific phrase (definite article "**the**" plus "**faith**" - Click for more on phrase **the faith**) which is found some 38 times in the NASB, some instances referring to **personal faith in Christ, saving faith** which is exercised by the individual and which is necessary for salvation.

**Bernard** says the faith is "the objective Christian creed" ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#);) (In other words = What is believed. The objective body of truth believed or by which one is saved).

**The faith** - Acts 3:16; 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Rom 4:11f, 16; 14:22; 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Eph 1:15; 4:13; Phil 1:25, 27; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 1:2, 14; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:1, 13; 3:15; Philemon 1:5; Jude 1:3; Rev 13:10 As you read the NT, remember that the specific meaning of this phrase **the faith** depends on the **context** (the text that goes with the text in question).

As alluded to above, approximately **one-half** of these 38 occurrences of **the faith** refer not to the **act** of believing, but rather to the object of the belief, or to **what** is believed, the latter being **the usage which is most apropos in the present context** On the other hand, we would be remiss not to emphasize that genuine personal **faith** is absolutely necessary if we are to be in **the faith** to which Paul refers here in 2Cor 13:5.

The first use of **the faith** referring to the body of truth believed is recorded by Luke who writes that

the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to **the faith**. (Acts 6:7+)

**Robertson** remarks that here "**the faith**" means "the Gospel, the faith system as in Gal 1:23; Jude 1:3, etc. Here the (phrase "the faith") means more than individual trust in Christ." (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

In a similar use we read of

Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from **the faith**. (Acts 13:8+)

Paul and Barnabas "returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in **the faith**, (not in "their faith" but in the body of truth they had placed their faith in) and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21,22)

Similarly we read that

the churches were being strengthened in **the faith**, (in the doctrinal truths concerning the gospel) and were increasing in number daily." (Acts 16:5+)

The believers in Jerusalem only knew Paul by reputation and "they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching **the faith** which he once tried to destroy." (Gal 1:23) This is another clear example of **the faith**" referring to the objective body of truth that composed the gospel message which Paul preached ceaselessly (1Cor 1:17, 2:1 2:2).

**Paul** exhorts the Corinthians to

be on the alert, stand firm in **the faith**, (sound doctrine they had believed) act like men, be strong. (1Cor 16:13)

**The faith** is used in a similar way in Paul's first letter to Timothy (1Ti 3:9,4:1, 5:8, 6:10).

Jude writes that we are to "contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints" which is clearly not a reference to the believers' faith but to the whole body of revealed salvation truth contained in the Scriptures, the objective truths which were to be believed, and the very truths which Jude warns were in danger of being distorted (Jude 1:3).

And in 2Timothy 4:7 (note), **the faith** Paul guarded refers in general to the revealed truth in the Word of God and more specifically to the unchangeable message of the gospel which brings salvation.

**Faith** (4102) (**pistis** [word study]) in most of it's NT uses refers to trust or belief. Pistis as it relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith or pistis relates to Christ it represents a genuine, strong (from the heart, not just the head) conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, sinful man's Redeemer, the only One through Whom one can obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). As noted, the present passage does not use pistis with this as the primary meaning, even though **personal pistis** is obviously necessary for one to be in **the faith**.

**John Piper** in his sermon on 1Cor 1:10 entitled "[The Nature of the Unity We Seek](#)" writes that...

Paul expects some disunity in the visible church (**Ed**: Piper is referring to the *church* at Corinth) because he knows that some of the **professing Christians are not genuine**. They are the ones who would **fail the test** in 2 Corinthians 13:5, and whose faith proves "vain" according to 1 Corinthians 15:1 (see notes). (Bolding

added)

## KJV Study Bible...

The challenge is to ascertain if they be genuine believers or fakes. ([Dobson, E. G., Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H. L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

**Albert Barnes** - The particular reason why Paul calls on them to examine themselves was, that there was occasion to fear that many of them had been deceived. Such had been the irregularities and disorders in the church at Corinth; so ignorant had many of them shown themselves of the nature of the Christian religion, that it was important, in the highest degree, for them to institute a strict and impartial examination to ascertain whether they had not been altogether deceived. This examination, however, is never unimportant or useless for Christians; and an exhortation to do it is always in place. So important are the interests at stake, and so liable are the best to deceive themselves, that all Christians should be often induced to examine the foundation of their hope of eternal salvation. **Whether ye be in the faith.** Whether you are true Christians. Whether you have any true faith in the gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ, and in the promises of God through him, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a true Christian; and to ascertain whether we have any true faith, therefore, is to ascertain whether we are sincere Christians. For some reasons for such an examination, and some remarks on the mode of doing it, See [1Co 11:28]. ([2 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

As noted earlier **Zane Hodges** is one of the writers who feels that Paul is not referring to the test and examination as an allusion to whether one is a genuine believer...

After twelve chapters in which Paul takes their Christianity for granted, can he only now be asking them to make sure they are born again? (**Absolutely Free**)

**John Witmer** in his review of Hodges' book "The Gospel Under Siege: A Study on Faith and Works" writes that one very significant problem/omission in Hodges' book is his...

failure to recognize that **profession of faith** can be **less than saving faith**. This fact is demonstrated in experience for one thing. Many Christians—perhaps even Hodges—were raised in godly Christian homes and “believed” the facts of the gospel long before they came to the point of saving faith in Christ. Certainly today many local congregations contain individuals who have “professed” to believe without ever exercising genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ and His redemptive death. This fact also is demonstrated in the Scriptures. The classic example is Judas Iscariot, who was numbered among the apostles and yet was identified by Jesus as “a devil” (Jn 6:70) and “the son of perdition” (Jn 17:12). Hodges himself refers to the “many antichrists” (1Jn 2:18) who are identified as “from the world” (1Jn 4:5). Yet they had at one time been associated with the apostles (1Jn 2:19) and had undoubtedly professed faith (**Ed**: cf the men in 2Pe 2:20, 21-note, 2Pe 2:22-note), which was subsequently shown to be not genuine. Paul challenged his readers, “**Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith**” (2Cor 13:5), a challenge which implies the possibility that some were not in the faith. (**Ed**: A “*possibility*” which Hodges dismisses in the preceding comment.) (Bibliotheca Sacra 140:557 Jan 83 p. 91)

The revered evangelical scholar **Lewis Sperry Chafer** has applied the principles of 2 Cor 13:5 to the examination of the authenticity of one's faith writing for example...

God is either supreme, with all that such a statement implies, or He is not; and **those who doubt His supremacy may well examine themselves to see whether they be in the faith at all (2Cor 13:5)**... 1Cor 15:1,2. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” The Apostle is not implying that some of the Corinthian believers were lost for want of faith; rather **it is that their faith has never been sufficient for salvation** (cf. 2Cor 13:5). ([The Eternal Security of the Believer Part 2](#); see also Lewis Sperry Chafer [The Eternal Security of the Believer. Part 1](#)) (Bolding added)

... It may be a problem whether an individual has entered into saving grace through Christ—and **here there is need of a clear apprehension of the Biblical evidence of so great a change** (cf. 2Co 13:5; 1Jn 5:13)—but there could be no problem involved with respect to the essential truth that, until perfectly saved by the infinite work of God, the soul is perfectly lost. ([The Saving Work of the Triune God](#) --BSac 105:420. Oct 48 p389 - see note above) (Bolding added)

**Willard Aldrich** (past president of Multnomah School of the Bible) wrote...

A **doctrine of assurance** that considers only the divine undertaking and promises for security **to the neglect**



of the equally plain teaching concerning the changed life of the saved may lull the professing Christian to sleep, the sleep of death in a false security. Hence the solemn warning:

**Examine** yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; **prove** your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Cor 13:5).

No better illustration of the balance of truth between God's affirmation of intention to keep His own and **the human, practical proof that we are His own** can be found than in John 10:27–28. The unequivocal statement of God's purpose to keep His own is found in the words of Christ,

"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."

But assurance that I am saved and shall be kept saved rests not only in faith in this statement of intention concerning His sheep but also in the realization that I am indeed one of His sheep. And here practical tests or characteristics of the sheep are cited:

"My sheep," the Good Shepherd says, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

([Safekeeping: What the Bible Teaches about Final Salvation](#)-- BSac 113:451. July 56 p249) (Bolding added)

**Gregory** - To what this self-examination is directed: "Whether ye be in the faith." Faith is the moral element, the spiritual atmosphere in and by which we have our being. When we say a man is in a rage, or in love, or in drink, we mean that rage, love, or drink has got possession of him. And so with a man "in the faith." It means that his views are coloured by, and that all his affections and habits are under the mastery of, faith. Now, a man may entertain strong affection or resentment, and yet not be in a rage or in love; and so a man may have the faith in himself and yet not be in the faith; may have no doubt as to the historical verity which constitutes the faith, and yet not be in it. How sad it is that with all this preaching, and singing, and school-teaching, the faith has so little influence over us. That is what we must examine ourselves about. 2. There are two classes in the present day. IV. What is the test of being in the faith? 1. Is Christ in you? That will determine that matter. Is He now--2. But what is the terrible alternative? "Except ye be reprobate"--rejected and cast away. The idea of judgment is kept up all the way through. This is the subject of examination. Examination arises respecting the last decisive test. If when you come before the bar of God, and the secrets of your hearts are judged according to the gospel, Christ is not in you, you must be a wandering wreck for ever--cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. ([Reference](#))

## **EXAMINE YOURSELVES!:** hautous dokimazete (2PPAM):

**Dr Charles Ryrie** - **yourselves** is emphatic; i.e., it is **yourselves**, not I, whom you should examine. fail the test. I.e., they failed to pass the test and were not members of the household of faith (also cf. 2 Cor 13:6). (Ryrie's interpretation is especially interesting as he is one who often sides with the Zane Hodges' position, but apparently not in this passage).

**John MacArthur** emphasizing the application of 2 Cor 13:5 to our individual lives, notes that this test and examination of one's self...

does not have to be a gloomy, morbid look inside yourself. Instead, it may simply consist of a series of questions you ask yourself, such as: Have I experienced the leading, encouraging, assuring work of the Holy Spirit in my life? Have I experienced any aspects of the fruit of the Spirit? Have I known and shown love for other members of the body of Christ? Has my heart longed to commune with God in prayer? Do I have a love for God's Word and are its truths clear and compelling to me? If you can remember times when the answer to any of these questions was clearly yes, then you are most likely a Christian. (The Silent Shepherd)

**NLT Study Bible** observes that there is...

a play on words here: They were looking for "proof" of Paul's apostolic authority, but Paul urges them, **Test yourselves** (or Prove yourselves). The lack of Christ's presence would disprove their authenticity as Christians. But Paul himself has demonstrated that he has not failed the test of apostolic authority (literally not been disproved).

**A W Tozer** observed that...

The philosopher Socrates said,

**An unexamined life is not worth living.**

If a common philosopher could think that, how much more we Christians ought to listen to the Holy Spirit when



He says, "**Examine yourself.**" An unexamined Christian lies like an unattended garden. Let your garden go unattended for a few months, and you will not have roses and tomatoes but weeds. An unexamined Christian life is like an un-kempt house. Lock your house up as tight as you will and leave it long enough, and when you come back you will not believe the dirt that got in from somewhere. An unexamined Christian is like an untaught child. A child that is not taught will be a little savage. It takes examination, teaching, instruction, discipline, caring, tending, weeding and cultivating to keep the life right.

**Jonathan Graf...**

It is important that we continually take stock of our relationship with the Lord—not because we are worried about losing our salvation, but because a relationship that isn't growing is a stagnant relationship and a hindrance to the work of God. (The Pursuit of God Study Guide)

**C H Spurgeon** applies Paul's text to our daily lives exhorting us...

Now, '**prove yourselves.**' Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man's religion will stand **examination** that will not stand **proof** (**Ed:** You may need to read that statement again as I did). We may sit at home and look at our religion, and say, 'Well, I think this will do!'

**Can you not bear a little self-examination?  
How will you bear that God-examination?**

If the scales of earth tell you that you are lacking, what message will the scales of heaven give you?

Some people, when I preach a stirring sermon, feel afraid to come again to hear me. Do searching sermons seem to go through you like a blast of the north wind, chilling you to the marrow and curdling your blood? Friend, if you are afraid of the pastor's voice, how will you bear His voice who will speak in tones of thunder? Oh, what must it be to stand before that dreadful tribunal? Are you doubting now? What will you be then? Can you not bear a little self-examination now? If not, how will you bear that God-examination? If earthly scales tell you that you are wanting, what message will the scales of heaven give you?

**John Piper** writes that...

### **We Should Examine Our Own Hearts and Lives**

First, since **religion** is a common cover for not being born again (Matthew 7:21), each of us churchgoers should examine ourselves to see if we are truly born of God (2Corinthians 13:5).

The New Testament gives us many tests to apply to ourselves. Here are five:

1. Romans 8:7, 8, 9, "The mind of the flesh does not submit to God's law ... but you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit if the Spirit dwells in you."

**The test: Do you have a submissive spirit to God's commands or are you rebellious?**

2. 1Corinthians 12:3, "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

**The test: Is Jesus really your Lord? Do you key off of Him each day? Do you seek His will in all things and subordinate your will to His?**

3. Romans 8:15, 16, "You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

**The test: Do you have a humble confidence before God that casts out fear and fills you with a childlike delight in knowing God as your loving Father? Do you cry out, "Abba! Father!"?**

4. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural man does not welcome the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him."

**The test: Do the things of the Spirit attract you? Are you hungry for His truth and His fellowship and His power in your life? Or do they seem silly and unattractive compared to other things. (Cf. 1 Peter 2:2.)**

5. 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves has been born of God."

**The test: Do you love people? Do you have good will toward them in your heart? Do you find fulfillment in working for**

the joy of their faith? (Cf. Galatians 5:22.)

(From his sermon [Creation, Fall, Redemption, and the Holy Spirit](#))

Spurgeon asks...

## HOW ARE YOU TO SEARCH YOURSELVES?

I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

**First, if you would examine yourselves, begin with your public life.** Are you dishonest? Can you thieve? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain, and violation of his holy day? Make short work with yourself; there will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that doeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God." You are reprobate; the wrath of God abideth on you. Your state is fearful; you are accursed now, and except you repent you must be accursed for ever.

And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Remember, professor, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved; or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. And here I must say, every one of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses, and fall upon our face, and cry again, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and let us seek for more grace, that henceforth our lives may be more consistent, and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

**Again: another set of tests--private tests.** How about your private life? Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as an habitual stranger to the Most High, having no love to him, and no fear of him? If so, I make short work of the matter: you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, "I could not live without prayer; I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray; I do love God's word, it is my meditation all the day; I love his people; I love his house; and I can say that my hands are often lifted upward towards him; and when my heart is busy with this world's affairs, it is often going up to his throne." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well.

**But go a little deeper.** Hast thou ever wept over thy lost condition? Hast thou ever bemoaned thy lost estate before God? Say, hast thou ever tried to save thyself, and found it a failure? and hast thou been driven to rely simply, wholly, and entirely on Christ? If so, then thou hast passed the test well enough. And hast thou now faith in Christ--a faith that makes thee love him; a faith that enables thee to trust him in the darkest hour? Canst thou say of a truth that thou hast a secret affection towards the Most High--that thou lovest his Son, that thy desire is after his ways, that thou feelest the influence of the Divine Spirit, and seekest every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

**And lastly, canst thou say that Jesus Christ is in thee?** If not, thou art reprobate. Sharp though that word be, thou art a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ be in thy heart, though thy heart sometimes be so dark that thou canst scarcely tell he is there, yet thou art accepted in the beloved, and thou mayest "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." ([Self-Examination - Sermon on 2Cor 13:5](#))

**Jeff Robinson** alludes to 2Cor 13:5 in his discussion of **Jonathan Edwards' Religious Affections** in which Edwards sets out the signs of true versus counterfeit conversion noting that "While Edwards' treatise is an invaluable work for the pastor who is charged with shepherding the flock, it is likewise for every believer a wrenching enforcement of 2 Cor. 13:5, which demands complacent Christians to "examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith." Religious Affections is one of Edwards' most readable works. It is also one of his most dissecting, sobering, and convicting. Read [Religious Affections \(online\)](#) and prepare to be shaken from spiritual slumber. (Read his interesting 5 page article [Religious Affections- Sorting the wheat from the Chaff](#))

**Examine** (1381) (**dokimazo** from **dokimos** = tested, proved or approved, tried as metals by fire and thus purified from **dechomai** = to accept, receive) means to assay, to test, to prove, to put to the test, to make a trial of, to verify, to discern to approve. **Dokimazo** involves not only testing but determining the genuineness or value of an event or object. That which has been tested is demonstrated to be genuine and trustworthy. In the present usage, Paul is commanding his readers to put themselves to the test to determine the genuineness of their profession, the reality of their conversion.

**Bishop Trench** adds that in classical Greek **dokimazo** "is the technical word for putting money to the dokime or proof, by aid of the dokimion or test (Plato, Timaeus, 65c;... ); that which endures this proof being dokimos, that which fails adokimos...The ore is not thrown into the fining pot—and this is the image which continually underlies the use of the word in the OT (Zech 13:9, Pr 8:10, 17:3, 27:21, Ps 65:10; Je 9:7... )—except in the expectation and belief that, whatever of dross may be found mingled with it, yet it is not all dross, but that some good metal, and better now than before, will come forth from the fiery trial (He 12:5-11, 2Macc 6:12-16). It is

ever so with the proofs to which He who sits as a Refiner in His Church submits His own; His intention in these being ever, not indeed to find His saints pure gold (for that He knows they are not), but to make them such; to purge out their dross, never to make evident that they are all dross. As such, He is the Refiner of hearts ( "God... examines [dokimazo] our hearts" 1Th 2:4-note), Jer 9:20, Ps 16:4)." ([See Trench's full discussion of dokimazo](#))

The main use of **dokimazo** in the NT is by Paul and he uses it six times in the letters to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 3:13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will **test** the quality of each man's work.

1 Corinthians 11:28 But let a man **examine** himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1 Corinthians 16:3 And when I arrive, whomever you may **approve**, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

2 Corinthians 8:8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as **proving** through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

2 Corinthians 8:22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often **tested** and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent, because of his great confidence in you.

Paul's last use of **dokimazo** in his writings to the Corinthians is in the present passage, in which he uses the **present imperative** which is a command calling his readers to give continual attention.

David uses both verbs **peirazo** and **dokimazo** in his request of the Almighty, a request which perhaps gives us some insight into why David was referred to as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22)...

(David's incredible plea to God) **Examine** (Lxx = dokimazo = present imperative) me, O LORD, and **try** (LXX = **peirazo** = present imperative) me; Test (LXX = **puroo** [word study] [heating precious metals red hot in order to refine them] = aorist imperative) my mind and my heart. (Ps 26:2-[Spurgeon's full note](#))

**Editorial comment:** Do we (I) dare pray this prayer? On the other hand, considering the gold that comes from the furnace of affliction, do we dare not? (cf 1Pe 1:5, 1Pe 1:7)

**Spurgeon's comment:** The psalmist was so clear from the charge laid against him, that he submitted himself unconditionally to any form of examination which the Lord might see fit to employ. Examine me, O Lord. Look me through and through; make a minute survey; put me to the question, cross examine my evidence. And prove me. Put me again to trial; and see if I would follow such wicked designs as my enemies impute to me. Try my reins and my heart. Assay me as metals are assayed in the furnace, and do this to my most secret parts, where my affections hold their court; see, O God, whether or no I love murder, and treason, and deceit. All this is a very bold appeal, and made by a man like David, who feared the Lord exceedingly, it manifests a most solemn and complete conviction of innocence. The expressions here used should teach us the thoroughness of the divine judgment, and the necessity of being in all things profoundly sincere, lest we be found wanting at the last. Our enemies are severe with us with the severity of spite, and this a brave man endures without fear; but God's severity is that of unswerving right. Who shall stand against such a trial? The sweet singer says "Who can stand before his cold?" and we may well enquire, "Who can stand before the heat of his justice?"

The psalmist uses three words, examine, prove, try. These words are designed to include all the modes in which the reality of anything is tested; and they imply together that he wished the most thorough investigation to be made; he did not shrink from any test. Albert Barnes.

Examine -- prove -- try. As gold, by fire, is severed and parted from dross, **so singleness of heart and true Christian simplicity** is best seen and made most evident in troubles and afflictions. **In prosperity every man will seem godly, but afflictions do draw out of the heart whatsoever is there, whether it be good or bad.** Robert Cawdray.

**Warren Wiersbe Comments:** Integrity means that your life is whole, that your heart is not divided (Ed: See on site resource: **Integrity - A Few Thoughts**). Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters" (Mt. 6:24-note). That's integrity. Duplicity means trying to serve two masters. Our Lord also said that nobody can look in two directions at the same time. If your eye is single, then your body is full of light. But if your eye is double, watch out. The darkness is coming in (Mt. 6:22,23-note). If you look at the darkness and the light simultaneously, the darkness crowds out the light.

In Ps 25:21 ([Spurgeon's note](#)) David prayed: "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You"; and in verse one of today's passage, "Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity." When we do business with or are ministering to someone, we want that person to have integrity.

When we have integrity, David tells us, we don't have to be afraid of sliding. "I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip" (Ps 26:1-[Spurgeon's note](#)). He also says, "My foot stands in an even place" (Ps 26:12[Spurgeon's note](#)). The word even means "a level place." David says, "I'm on the level because I have integrity. I have nothing in my heart against the Lord. I am not disobeying Him."

**We also need not be afraid of testing** David writes, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart" (Ps 26:2). He says, in other words,

"Lord, I can go through the furnace. I can go through the X ray. Go ahead and test me. I'm not afraid."

When your life is whole before God and others, when you're practicing integrity, when you have a good conscience, you don't have to be afraid of the battle or the furnace or the X ray or the testing. God will see you through.

When you walk with integrity, you walk on solid ground. Never try to serve two masters. Always keep your heart undivided before the Lord. (Back to the Bible)

**Spurgeon** once said that...

The man who does not like self-examination may be pretty certain that things need examining.

In his devotional for August 23 **John MacArthur** writes...

Many professed believers go through life with an indifferent attitude toward their sins. Yet the Lord tells His people to examine their lives each time they come to His table (1Co 11:28). And the apostle Paul admonished the Corinthian church, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2Co 13:5). If you do this regularly and with a positive attitude, you will make sure your inner motives and desires are set toward pleasing God, even though you often fail Him (see Rom. 7:14-25). (Truth for today : a daily touch of God's grace)

**Albert Barnes**...

**Prove your own selves.** The word here used (dokimazete) is stronger than that before used, and rendered "examine," (peirazete.) This word, **prove**, refers to assaying or trying metals by the powerful action of heat; and the idea here is, that they should make the most thorough trial of their religion, to see whether it would stand the test. See [1Co 3:13]. The proof of their piety was to be arrived at by a faithful examination of their own hearts and lives; by a diligent comparison of their views and feelings with the word of God; and especially by making trial of it in life.

The best way to prove our piety is to subject it to actual trial in the various duties and responsibilities of life. A man who wishes to prove an axe, to see whether it is good or not, does not sit down and look at it, or read all the treatises which he can find on axe-making, and on the properties of iron and steel, valuable as such information would be; but he shoulders his axe, and goes into the woods, and puts it to the trial there. If it cuts well; if it does not break; if it is not soon made dull, he understands the quality of his axe better than he could in any other way.

So if a man wishes to know what his religion is worth, let him try it in the places where religion is of any value. Let him go into the world with it. Let him go and try to do good; to endure affliction in a proper manner; to combat the errors and follies of life; to admonish sinners of the error of their ways; and to urge forward the great work of the conversion of the world, and he will soon see there what his religion is worth--as easily as a man can test the qualities of an axe. Let him not merely sit down and think, and compare himself with the Bible, and look at his own heart--valuable as this may be in many respects; but let him treat his religion as he would anything else--let him subject it to actual experiment.

That religion which will enable a man to imitate the example of Paul... or the great Master himself, in doing good, is genuine. That religion which will enable a man to endure persecution for the name of Jesus; to bear calamity without murmuring; to submit to a long series of disappointments and distresses for Christ's sake, is genuine. That religion which will prompt a man unceasingly to a life of prayer and self-denial; which will make him ever conscientious, industrious, and honest; which will enable him to warn sinners of the error of their ways, and which will dispose him to seek the friendship of Christians, and the salvation of the world, is pure and genuine. That will answer the purpose. It is like the good axe with which a man can chop all day long, in which there is no flaw, and which does not get dull, and which answers all the purposes of an axe. Any other religion than this is worthless. ([2 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Bishop Hopkins** wrote that...

If your state be good, searching into it will give you that comfort of it. If your state be bad, searching into it cannot make it worse; nay, it is the only way to make it better, for conversion begins with conviction.

Puritan **Thomas Brooks** describes the value of testing ourselves noting that...

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night. Torches are the better for beating. Grapes come not to the proof till they come to the press. Spices smell sweetest when pounded. Young trees root the faster for shaking. Vines are the better for bleeding. Gold looks the brighter for scouring; and juniper smells sweeter in the fire.

**A faith that cannot be tested  
cannot be trusted!**

Too many who profess to be "Christians" possess a "false faith" which will be "proved" no faith in the trials of life as Jesus illustrated in His parable on the soils

The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places... is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" (Mt 13:20, 21, **Context:** Mt 13:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 of Mk 4:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, Lk 8:11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

The Dutch second reformation theologian [Wilhelmus à Brakel \(biography\)](#) in his magnum opus **The Christian's Reasonable Service** (see links at end of this note - this work is basically a study of systematic theology), offers some interesting thoughts on the "**Necessity of Self-Examination**"...

Whoever you are, as you read or hear this read, I ask you—give your answer to an omniscient God—what do you say about yourself? Are you a true believer or not? Come, search yourself closely and examine yourself, for:

**First**, you are at this present moment either a child of God or a child of Satan; you cannot be both at once nor can you be neutral, as there is no third option. Impress this upon your heart, regardless of how prominent or despised you are, or how blessed or wretched you are. Is it not worth the effort to examine yourself as to who you are? Should one be careless in such a weighty matter? For such is the practice of foolish virgins, upon whose end we should reflect.

**Secondly**, not those who are baptized, and not all who attend church and partake of the Lord's Supper are true believers. Yes, only a few, and by far the smallest number of them are true believers on the way to eternal felicity. Think of a multitude as you would find in the marketplace where people can be seen mingling together as ants—or as you would find gathered in a filled church. While doing so consider the following: Simon the sorcerer was baptized (Acts 8:13); the guest without the wedding garment sat at the table (Matt. 22:11); half of the virgins were foolish (Matt. 25:2). Only few are chosen (Matt. 20:16). Only few find the narrow way and enter through the narrow gate, while there are many who are on the broad way who, through the wide gate, run to their damnation (Matt. 7:13–14). And thus our focus is upon you—and should you not ask yourself what hope you are entertaining about yourself? "Lord, is it I?" (Matt. 26:22); "Master, is it I?" (vs. 25).

**Thirdly**, it is most detrimental to neglect self-examination and the searching of one's heart. Such neglect holds man captive in the sleep of carelessness. It causes him to waste time. It renders the means of grace useless and impotent. It hardens his heart against all the threatenings and judgments of God. It holds him captive to the world and to sin; yes, it is the key whereby he closes heaven and opens hell for himself.

**Fourthly**, self-examination is very beneficial. It causes one to become conscious of the evils which dwell in the heart. It causes one to become acquainted with the avenging justice of God. It causes one to become concerned, frightened, and perplexed. It causes one to flee to Jesus for justification and sanctification. It causes one to become serious in heart. And if one may perceive grace, light, life, and faith, it cannot be expressed what joy this generates in the heart and what a strengthening effect this has! It repeatedly provides a person with new courage; he receives more liberty in prayer and he becomes acquainted with the ways in which God deals with souls. It gladdens his heart and it has a sanctifying influence upon all his actions. "And every man that has this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

**Fifthly**, to neglect this self-examination due to laziness, discouragement, or despair, robs a person of all comfort and joy, obstructs his growth, and denies God His honor. Therefore, examine yourself frequently, and often give answer to the question, "Simon, lovest thou Me?" (John 21:17).

It is also God's express command; whoever neglects this, not surrendering to His will, is disobedient toward God. How can such a person prosper? "Let us search and try our ways" (Lam. 3:40); "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired" (Zep. 2:1). "Let a man examine himself" (1 Cor. 11:28); "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how



that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). Submit to the counsel and command of God, and you will prosper.

**Sixthly**, it is possible for one to come to the knowledge of his spiritual state—whether one is in the covenant of grace with God, and whether or not one is a believer. To imagine that such is impossible causes a decline in serious concern about spiritual matters and therefore I wish to state that it is possible for one to know this. The bride knew that Jesus was hers: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Sol. 2:16). "For I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25); "... and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. 60:16). "For I am persuaded," etc. (Rom. 8:38). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live" (Gal. 2:20). Thus it should be noted that it is possible for a person to be assured. Therefore, strive to attain to such assurance. It is also possible, however, for a natural man to be convinced that he is still in an unregenerate state.

**Seventhly**, even though it is possible to come to this realization by the grace of the Holy Spirit, not every one does. Many thousands will go to hell who imagine that they will enter heaven. There will also be many, however, who will enter heaven who feared that they would not arrive there. And even those who at times may stand strong, can readily become weak and come into darkness. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. LORD, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled" (Ps 30:6–7).

In some true partakers of the covenant of grace there is still much darkness, so that they do not have a clear perception of what constitutes sufficient light and life. Although they know this when considering it divorced from themselves, and would be capable of stating this clearly to others, they nevertheless lack sufficient light to observe these graces in themselves. Moreover, so much of the old man yet remains in them—a fact upon which they focus to such an extent that they question whether this can coexist with grace—that they live between hope and fear. Hence they are poor, even though they possess much that is good. Others have good opinions of themselves, but they deceive themselves miserably. "There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). Consider, therefore, how necessary it is that we scrutinize our hearts and examine ourselves as to who and how we are. (Wilhelmus a Brakel - The Christian's Reasonable Service - see links below).

**Comment:** See page 1562 (going through page 1608) in The Christian's Reasonable Service for Brakel's related very sobering discussion of the "**Various forms of self-deceit identified and false foundations exposed**" which he introduces with this comment "*To be of assistance in this matter, I shall describe several spiritual frames, so that you may examine yourself as to what sort of person you are.*" Brakel follows this heart probing discussion by addressing the marks of those who have deceived themselves with false assumptions regarding Biblical salvation (e.g., "*I do not live such an ungodly life; I have been baptized; I partake of the Lord's Supper; I diligently go to church; I am upright in my conversation; I do not curse; I do not party; I am not boastful; I read God's Word; I say my prayers. What more can you ask of me?*"). Brakel then follows this section with the distinguishing marks of "**Temporal and True Believers**" and concludes this section on page 1581 with a discussion of "*the spiritual frame of the true believer*".

- [The Christian's Reasonable Service, vol. 1 \(indexed\)](#)
- [The Christian's Reasonable Service, vol. 2 \(indexed\)](#)
- [The Christian's Reasonable Service, vol. 3 \(indexed\)](#)
- [The Christian's Reasonable Service, vol. 4 \(indexed\)](#)

Brian Bell...

**4.2.3. Before we examine someone else's life we are encouraged to examine our own 1st!**

**4.2.4. Note 3 words used here: Examine & Test & Know.**

**4.2.5. Examine – A test.**

4.2.5.1. Q: Do you have a personal relationship w/Christ?

4.2.5.2. Q: Have you experienced any significant changes in your life through knowing Him.

4.2.5.3. Q: Do you experience His leading, His presence, His peace, & His joy?



4.2.5.4. Q: If you were to die today, do you have the assurance of eternity w/God?

#### 4.2.6. Test – A proof.

4.2.6.1. Q: How would you “prove” you were a Christian.

4.2.6.2. Q: If you were abducted like Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer in Afghanistan would there have been enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian?

4.2.6.3. Q: Can you show evidence you are really a changed person? How different are your thoughts? Your habits? Your goals? Your relationships? Your feelings?

4.2.6.4. Q: Are you getting easier to live with?

4.2.6.5. Q: Are your attitudes any different now than they were in the past?

#### 4.2.7. Know – A perception.

4.2.7.1. Q: Do you have any inner discernment?

4.2.7.2. Q: Do you have His peace? ([2Corinthians notes](#))

James Denney writes that...

The Corinthians, by their rebellious spirit, were putting Paul to the proof; in ver. 5 he reminds them sharply that it is their own standing as Christians which is in question, and not his. "Try **yourselves**," he says, with abrupt emphasis, "not me; try yourselves, if ye are in the faith; put yourselves to the proof; or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?---unless, indeed, ye be reprobate." The meaning here is hardly open to doubt: the Apostle urges his readers individually to examine their Christian standing. "Let each," he virtually says, "put himself to the proof, and see whether he is in the faith." There is, indeed, a difficulty in the clause, "Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?---unless, indeed, ye be reprobate." This may be read either as a test, put into their hands to direct them in their self-scrutiny; or as an appeal to them after--or even before---the scrutiny has been made. The manner in which the alternative is introduced--"unless, indeed, ye are reprobates"---a manner plainly suggesting that the alternative in question is not to be assumed, is in favour of taking it in the sense of an appeal. After all, they are a Christian Church with Christ among them, and they cannot but know it. Paul, again, on his side cannot think that they are reprobate, and he hopes they will recognize that he is not, but on the contrary a genuine apostle, attested by God, and to acknowledged and obeyed by the Church. (Click to read his entire lengthy comment in [The Expositor's Bible](#))

Warren Wiersbe writes that...

To begin with, Paul told the Corinthians that they should examine their hearts to see if they were really born again and members of the family of God. Do you have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart? (Ro 8:9, 16) Do you love the brethren? (1Jn 3:14) Do you practice righteousness? (1John 2:29; 3:9) Have you overcome the world so that you are living a life of godly separation? (1John 5:4) These are just a few of the tests we can apply to our own lives to be certain that we are the children of God.

In one of the churches I pastored, we had a teenager who was the center of every problem in the youth group. He was a gifted musician and a member of the church, but nevertheless he was a problem. One summer when he went off to our church youth camp, the youth leaders and church officers and I agreed together to pray for him daily. At one of the meetings, he got up and announced that he had been saved that week! His Christian profession up to that time had been counterfeit. He experienced a dramatic change in his life, and today he is serving the Lord faithfully.

**No doubt many of the problems in the church at Corinth were caused by people who professed to be saved, but who had never repented and trusted Jesus Christ. Our churches are filled with such people today.** Paul called such people **reprobate**, which means "counterfeit, discredited after a test." Paul used this word again in 2Corinthians 13:6, 7, emphasizing the fact that it is important for a person to know for sure that he is saved and going to heaven (see 1 John 5:11, 12, 13). ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament, Victor](#)) (Bolding added)

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- **Recognize:** 1Co 3:16 6:2,15,19 9:24 Jas 4:4)

Don't you thoroughly know this about yourselves

**Do you not recognize this about yourselves** - This phrase in Greek expects an affirmative reply.

**Recognize** (1921) (**epiginosko** [word study] from **epí** = upon, an intensive which gives force of "fully" + **ginosko** = to know) (See also the discussion of the related noun **epignosis**) means to know fully, to know with certainty, to become thoroughly acquainted with or to know thoroughly. **Epiginosko** means to possess more or less definite information about, and can imply a degree of thoroughness. It speaks of full or added knowledge (see epignosis). **Epiginosko** also means to recognize a thing to be what it really is, to acknowledge, to understand

**Vincent** - Assuming that you thus prove yourselves, does not this test show you that Christ is in you as the result of your faith in him?

**MacArthur** comments that...

The New Testament affirmation that people can know that they have been saved directly contradicts the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome officially holds that "no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God"... Paul's call for the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were truly saved would have been pointless if such knowledge were impossible to obtain. The apostle was confident that the majority of the Corinthians would find their faith genuine and experience the blessings of assurance... Those who did fail the test could also experience those blessings if they repented and exercised genuine faith in Christ.

But Paul, too, would benefit when the majority examined themselves and discovered their faith to be real. In fact, since they were the fruit of his ministry, it would prove that he was a genuine apostle. The Corinthians were caught on the horns of a dilemma, as D. A. Carson points out:

If the Corinthians declare they have failed the test, then doubtless Paul will be humiliated (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21); but in that case the Corinthians are in no position to point the finger at anyone. If on the other hand, they feel they have passed the test, then since Paul did all the initial evangelization among them he is the last person they are in a position to condemn. (From *Triumphalism to Maturity* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], 179)

If they doubted Paul's apostleship, they would have to doubt his message. But if they doubted his message, they would also have to doubt their own conversion. The most convincing proof of Paul's apostleship was the Corinthians' own transformed lives; if they were truly saved, then he had to be a true apostle. Paul knew the majority of the Corinthians were genuine believers and would therefore realize that he did not fail the test. ([MacArthur, J: 2Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Philip Hughes** explains that...

The trouble-makers have been inciting the Corinthians to demand proof that Christ speaks in Paul. In other words, they have been impugning his apostolic authority. But Paul tells his readers that it is they themselves that they must examine and put to the proof. If such self-examination reveals that they have experience of the grace of God, then that alone is proof irrefutable that it is none other than Christ who speaks in Paul, for it was precisely through his ministry in Corinth that they received the gospel and passed from death to life.

**He thus appeals to their self-knowledge, which of all knowledge is the most intimate and indisputable: if they know Jesus Christ to be in themselves, then they know, by simple logic, that He is in the one who proclaimed Jesus Christ to them.**

The form of the question, "**or do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?**" is mildly ironical, and its tone indicates Paul's confidence that they do know quite certainly the indwelling presence of Christ in their lives.

The sole awful alternative to such certain knowledge is that they are **reprobates**—put to the proof and rejected as spurious.

**This doubtless is always true of some within the Church;  
but it cannot be true of the Church as a whole.**

The very existence of the Church in Corinth testifies to the saving and transforming power of the gospel of

Christ. The spiritual gifts and blessings they enjoy cannot be the experience of those who are reprobate. The Corinthian Christians are veritably Paul's epistle commendatory, addressed to the world at large (2Co 3:2); they are the seal of his apostleship in the Lord (1Cor. 9:2). The bar of their own consciences will substantiate the genuineness both of their own standing in Christ and of his authority as their apostle (cf. 2Co 4:2,5:11). ([Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes](#))

**Henry Morris** writes that "Paul here reminds the Corinthians--and us--that it is quite possible for a man or woman to profess Christ and salvation, yet still be unsaved. They may even deceive themselves into thinking that such a profession has saved them. Therefore, we need to examine ourselves to prove ourselves. The sure [proof](#) is the realization that Christ is indwelling us, by the Holy Spirit, resulting in godly lives and glad acceptance of all the revealed Word of God, as inspired by the same Holy Spirit. (Defender's Study Bible)

While this question might be redundant it is worth repeating -- is not self-examination one of the great benefits of frequent partaking of the Lord's Supper? (Rhetorical of course)...

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine (same verb dokimazo Paul uses in 2 Cor 13:5) himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (DIE! TAKING COMMUNION CALLS FOR SERIOUS SELF-EXAMINATION GIVEN THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE TO DO SO!). 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (1 Cor 11:27-32)

**Matthew Henry** - And therefore, as a proof to those who among the Corinthians sought a proof of Christ's speaking in the apostle, he puts them upon proving their Christianity (2 Cor 13:5): **Examine yourselves**, etc. Hereby he intimates that, if they could prove their own Christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship; for if they were in the faith, if Jesus Christ was in them, this was a proof that Christ spoke in him, because it was by his ministry that they did believe. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. He had begotten them again by the gospel of Christ. Now it could not be imagined that a divine power should go along with his ministrations if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore they could prove themselves not to be reprobates, not to be rejected of Christ, he trusted they would know that he was not a reprobate (v. 6), not disowned by Christ. **What the apostle here says of the duty of the Corinthians to examine themselves, etc., with the particular view already mentioned, is applicable to the great duty of all who call themselves Christians, to examine themselves concerning their spiritual state.** We should examine whether we be in the faith, because it is a matter in which we may be easily deceived, and wherein a deceit is highly dangerous: we are therefore concerned to prove our own selves, to put the question to our own souls, whether Christ be in us, or not; and Christ is in us, except we be reprobates: so that either we are true Christians or we are great cheats; and what a reproachful thing is it for a man not to know himself, not to know his own mind!

**John Piper** makes the important point that...

It is possible for true Christians, with genuine saving faith, to go through periods of time in which they do not have the full assurance of hope. John said in 1 John 5:13, "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." In other words, the heart's true allegiance to Christ and true union with Christ are not completely identical with strong feelings of assurance. Faith can be real when the feelings of assurance are weak.

But God commands us to be earnest and zealous in our pursuit of full assurance. Because that is where the joy and freedom and power are found.

### **Two Ways to Pursue Assurance**

Now there are two ways to pursue assurance. One is by examining ourselves and seeing the evidences that the dominion of sin has been broken and that we have new desires and disciplines. This is what Peter meant when he said, "Therefore brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election" (2 Peter 1:10). And what Paul meant when he said, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Or do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? If you are not disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

**Thomas Watson** put it this way 350 years ago,

If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him? If a jailer come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned; so how shall we know God hath pardoned us? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God, this is a

blessed sign we are pardoned. (A Puritan Golden Treasury, p. 25)

But there is another way to pursue assurance. And for people who are given to excessive self-examination and doubt this is surely the more hopeful path. The book of Hebrews puts it very simply like this: "Consider Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Or: "Look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). In other words, do not dwell on yourself, dwell on what God has done in Jesus Christ.

There is a paradox here. For many people—most people, I think—the more we focus on the subjective inner workings of our own soul and the relative purity or impurity of our own attitudes and behavior, the more uncertain we become of our own assessment of our authenticity. Paradoxically the path to assurance is to shift our focus off of ourselves and onto God. Off of the subjective and onto the objective. ([God Has Chosen Us in Him Before the Foundation of the Earth](#)) (See another sermon by **John Piper** entitled [Sealed by the Spirit to the Day of Redemption](#) wherein he quotes 9 New Testament passages including 2Co 13:5 and notes that "All of these passages teach that the **test of genuineness** for the Christian is *perseverance* in faith and *holiness* of life. They warn us that the attempt to offer security apart from lasting faith and loving lives is perilous. **We might succeed and give someone security at the price of destruction.**" Bolding added. Italics in the original.)

In another message **Dr Piper** quotes Paul in 2Co 11:2,3...

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

So at the end of the book (2Co 13:5) he calls them to test themselves:

**Examine** yourselves to see whether you are holding to your faith. **Test** yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

**The Test of Genuine Faith** - What is the test? What is the evidence that their faith is genuine? The answer of 2Co 7:10 would be: there is a path that leads to salvation and one that leads to death. The way to test your faith is to test which path you are on. The path that leads to salvation is not the path of sinless perfection (just as we saw last week, that's not the test). It is the path of godly grief and genuine repentance. "Godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation." Are we grieved by our sin with a godly grief and do we turn from it—that is the test of our faith and the evidence that Christ is in us 1. Godly regret is good. 2. Godly regret produces repentance. 3. And, therefore, godly regret leads to salvation. (Bolding added) (Take a moment to read Dr Piper's entire sermon - [The Good End of Godly Regret](#))

In addressing the question of how one can be assured of their eternal security, Dr Piper asks...

What shall we do? How shall we know and enjoy and be assured of our eternal security? He 3:12, 13 give two answers: one more general and the other more specific.

First the general answer in He 3:12:

"Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God."

The general answer is, "Take care!" or "Take heed!" or "Look!" In other words, don't be careless or nonchalant or inattentive about the condition of your heart. Look at it.

**As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:5, test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.**

Or like Peter says in 2 Peter 1:10,

"Be diligent to confirm your election and your calling."

Don't coast or drift and take your perseverance in faith for granted. All kinds of alternative passions are making war on your soul every day to steal your faith and replace Christ with other treasures. Take care! Be on the look out! Be earnest! Be watchful over your heart. As Proverbs 4:23 says,

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

That's the answer of verse 12. Take heed!

Someone may ask, "Well, if I am a true partaker of Christ, as I believe I am, why do I have to take heed and be so vigilant, when you have said that I am eternally secure and can't lose my standing in Christ?" I think the

question assumes something that the New Testament says is not true. It assumes that God's way for his chosen ones to get to heaven is without vigilance and watchfulness and self-assessment and diligent use of means. But in fact Jesus says, in Luke 13:24.

"Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

And Peter says,

"Be sober, be watchful, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (1Peter 5:8).

The truth is not that true Christians don't have to be vigilant and watchful over their hearts; but that you can know you are a true Christian if you are vigilant and watchful over your heart.

It's the cavalier Christians who need to be worried about their standing. It's those who were baptized and walked an aisle or prayed a prayer and took communion and came to church, but do not love Jesus or count him their dearest treasure or bank their hope on him and look forward to seeing him and can say, "To live is Christ and to die is gain." These are the self-assured ones who need to feel insecure (see Dt 29:19). They are people, often in the church, who treat their salvation like a vaccination. They got the vaccination years ago and assume all is well without giving any thought to the dangers of unbelief around them. They say, "I got inoculated against hell when I was eight days old—or six years old." And so getting to heaven is not a matter of vigilance over their heart to keep it from becoming hard and unbelieving. It's simply a matter of making sure that the inoculation happened. These are the ones that are in tremendous danger. (Read the full message [Eternal Security Is a Community Project](#))

For another way we can **test ourselves** read Piper's sermon [especially toward the end of his message where he writes "*Oh, what a warning to us all! Listen carefully and lay this to heart: Just as in the Old Testament you could be a circumcised, sacrifice-offering, outwardly law-abiding, physical child of Abraham and not a spiritual child of Abraham (Jn 8:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44; Ro 9:8), so in the New Testament church—so in Bethlehem—you can be a baptized, communion-taking, worship-attending, tithe-giving, doctrine-affirming church member and not be a child of God.*" **[Ed comment: Woe!]** (Read Piper's full message [You Stand Fast Through Faith, So Do Not Become Proud, But Fear](#))

Piper adds that...

Whenever the Word of God is faithfully preached, you are given a standard by which to test yourselves. It may affirm the reality of Christ's work in your life and send you rejoicing with new power. Or it may prick your conscience and send you to prayer and repentance. But God forbid that you should pigeonhole a message from Galatians as applicable only to unbelievers or only to your degree of blessing in heaven. It is written for the church and the issue is the continental divide between divine blessing and divine curse. (Read [Christ Redeemed Us from the Curse of the Law](#))

## THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU: hoti Iesous Christos en humin

- **Jesus Christ:** Jn 15:4 17:23,26 Gal 4:19 Eph 2:20, 21, 22 Eph 3:17 Col 1:27 Col 2:19 1Pe 2:4,5

**Cross references on Christ in the believer...**

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (2Corinthians 6:16+)

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:56)

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. (John 14:23)

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20+)

In **Galatians** Paul has a parallel passage...

My children, with whom I am again in labor until **Christ** is formed **in** you (Ga 4:19+).

In **Romans** Paul emphasizes that...

If **Christ is in** you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. (Ro 8:10+)

**That Jesus Christ is in you** - Stated another way -- "that you are believers" = Christ in believers and believers in Christ (see notes) reflects the union and oneness of covenant (the New Covenant in His blood - see topic [The Oneness of Covenant and Why the New is Better](#)).

**Guzik** notes that here Paul describes what we are to look for when we test and examine ourselves "We are to see that Jesus Christ is in you. We are not to look for perfection, in ourselves or in others; but we should see real evidence of Jesus Christ in us. ([2 Corinthians 13](#))

**John Piper** spoke almost like a modern day "prophet" (in the sense of speaking forth, not speaking before it comes to pass and not in the sense of new revelation) to the evangelical church in America when he said..

I sometimes fear that we have so redefined **conversion** in terms of human decisions and have so removed any necessity of the experience of God's Spirit, that many people think they are saved when in fact they only have Christian ideas in their head not spiritual power in their heart. (from [How to Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit](#)) (Bolding added)

**Comment:** In other words, he fears the tragic and dangerous deception that many people are sitting in their same seat in church Sunday after Sunday and yet they have never allowed the Spirit of Christ to take His "seat" in their heart (cf Ro 8:9-note)!

**Spurgeon** asked "Now, what is it to have **Jesus Christ in you**? The Roman Catholic hangs the cross on his bosom; true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cures for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart - Christ crucified (1Co 1:23) in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27-note) - all the cross of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks.

**Albert Barnes** - "**To be in Christ**, or for **Christ to be in us**, is a common mode in the Scriptures of expressing the idea that we are **Christians**. It is language derived from the close union which subsists between the Redeemer and his people. See the phrase explained See [Ro 8:10-note].

**Jamieson** has an interesting insight paraphrasing Paul as saying "I need not speak much in proof of **Christ being in me**, your minister (2Co 13:3), for if ye try your own selves ye will see that **Christ is also in you** [Chrysostom], (Ro 8:10-note). Finding Christ dwelling in yourselves... ye may well believe that He speaks in me, by whose ministry ye have received this faith [Estius]. To doubt it would be the sin of Israel, who, after so many miracles and experimental proofs of God's presence, still cried (Ex 17:7), "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Compare Mk 8:11).

**Wesley** - All Christian believers know this, by the witness and by the fruit of his Spirit. (Wesley's Notes)

**James Rosscup** writes that "Paul is concerned for those at Corinth, some of whom may prove to be "rejected" (adokimoi), not having Christ in them (2Cor 13:5, 6, 7). ([The Overcomer of the Apocalypse - Grace Theological Journal 03:2 Fall 1982](#))

**Richard Pratt** explains that - To encourage them further toward self-examination, Paul asked if they did not realize that Christ Jesus was in them. Christ's Spirit at work in the believer has certain effects of sanctification and faithfulness (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note; 2Pet. 3:18-note). If the Corinthians' claims to faith were true, they were united to Christ, and the Holy Spirit was making the truth of their claims evident in their lives. But **if the life of any believer showed no signs of the Spirit's activity, then the Spirit was not working in him and Christ was not indwelling him**. Paul had already mentioned that the Corinthians were being tested. Their response to his instructions would prove whether their faith was genuine. (Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Corinthians - see also his sermon material [2 Corinthians 12:14-13:14 People, Get Ready](#)) (Bolding added)

**UNLESS YOU FAIL THE TEST: ei meti adokimoi este. (2PPAI)**

- **You fail the test:** 2Co 13:6,7 Jer 6:30 Ro 1:28 2Ti 3:8 Titus 1:16 1Co 9:27 Heb 6:8)

**"THE ALMOST**



## CHRISTIAN"

([see note](#))

**Unless (ei meti)** says Bernard ([The Expositor's Greek Testament](#)) writes that this phrase implies that it "is certainly not the case" (that the readers are "adokimos"). Clearly **Bernard** favors interpretation [#2](#) adding that "Their own consciousness of the power of Christ's grace is the best proof that his preaching to them was Divinely authorized; he "begat them in Christ Jesus" (1Cor 4:15)" ([See interpretative approach #2](#))

**Brown** comments that "the two words *ei meti* are usually translated together as "unless indeed, unless perhaps." The word *meti* is simply a longer and more intense form of the more common Greek negative *mé*. This last point is important. The specific combination of *ei meti* occurs only three times in the New Testament (Lk 9:13; 1Co 7:5; 2Co 13:5), and the insights one can gain from comparing these three passages are limited.

**Brown** goes on to comment that...

Thayer specifically says that this word combination in 2 Corinthians 13:5 is used ironically, that is, what is said is the opposite of what is meant. On the surface, then, Paul's words might suggest that the Corinthians were not Christians, but the syntax of his sentence indicates he did not believe that was true at all. Other Bible commentators have also understood the irony and "unreality" of Paul's statement in this passage. **Bruce** writes,

Rather than question if Christ is speaking in Paul, let them question if Christ is living in themselves—as, of course, he is, unless indeed they fail to meet the test: unless they are adokimoi, 'counterfeit' (which Paul does not believe they are).

**Lenski** notes that "ei meti implies that such a thing as the Corinthians being disproved or spurious cannot be possible. (from [What Is the Meaning of "Examine Yourselves" in 2 Corinthians 13:5?](#))

**Fail the test** is translated with the pithy word "**reprobate**" in the King James Version, although some interpreters strongly object to the use of this rendering of **adokimos** in light of their belief that Paul was not addressing a "mixed" group at Corinth, but a church which was comprised solely of believers ("100%!!!!").

There are those who chaff at the possibility that there might have been unbelievers in the church at Corinth (forgetting that even the 12 disciples harbored one very good counterfeit unbeliever!) and thus they propose that those who "fail the test" are believers who will lose their eternal rewards. Beloved, Paul states nothing about eternal rewards in this passage and to postulate such a premise is to add to the text what is not present.

**Fix'd is their everlasting state,  
Could man repent, 'tis then too late.  
There are no acts of pardon pass'd  
In the cold grave, to which we haste;  
But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."**

**Henry Alford** - Reprobates, literally "not abiding the proof,"; Worthless, -- i.e., in this case, "mere pretended Christians." ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

**David Guzik** - Paul knew there were some among the Corinthian Christians who were disqualified for eternal life and salvation. Their thinking was worldly because they were of the world, not of the Lord. This is a hard truth to confront, but it is better to know now than when it is too late! The word for disqualified is simply the negative of the word for test in this same passage. If we don't examine ourselves and test ourselves now, we may find that we ultimately don't pass the test and are disqualified.

**Adam Clarke** - There is no other kind of reprobation mentioned here than that which refers to the trial and rejection of adulterated coin; and, by way of metaphor, to the detection of false Christianity. ([2 Corinthians - Chapter 13](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** tells the story of one of the churches he pastored in which there was "a teenager who was the center of every problem in the youth group. He was a gifted musician and a member of the church, but nevertheless he was a problem. One summer when he went off to our church youth camp, the youth leaders and church officers and I agreed together to pray for him daily. At one of the meetings, he got up and announced that he had been saved that week! His Christian profession up to that time had been counterfeit. He experienced a dramatic change in his life, and today he is serving the Lord faithfully. No doubt many of the problems in the church at Corinth were caused by people who professed to be saved, but who had never repented and trusted Jesus Christ. Our churches are filled with such people today. Paul called such people reprobate, which means "counterfeit,

discredited after a test." Paul used this word again in 2 Corinthians 13:6, 7, emphasizing the fact that it is important for a person to know for sure that he is saved and going to heaven (see 1 Jn 5:11, 12, 13-note). ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament, Victor](#))

Tom Wells in his article "[Misunderstandings of Grace](#)" wrote that...

Many today seem to think that **grace** is unconnected with **good works**. A man once said from my pulpit, "My religion has nothing to do with good works." At the time I took him to mean that his justification did not depend on good works. If that is what he meant he certainly was right, as I hope to show shortly. Later, however, I saw reason to think that he meant exactly what he said, though I hope I misjudged him.

The doctrine of the **security of the believer** is sometimes preached in a way that leaves a godly life as an option for the Christian. It is looked upon as a desirable option, to be sure, but an option nevertheless. No doubt many pastors who hold this idea do so to protect the freeness of justification. Many of them also are zealous to see their people become more holy, and they preach with that in mind.

But the effect of such preaching is often to harden people in their sins. Pulpits where this misunderstanding exists never ring with the words, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). They do not often sound the note of Peter, "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10+).

If a godly life does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with God's salvation by grace, these texts are robbed of their force. After giving a long list of virtues that the Christian must eagerly pursue, Peter says, "Make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:10, 11+). ([Misunderstandings of Grace - Reformation and Revival 03:1 Winter 1994](#))

**Fail the test** (96)(**adokimos** from **a** = without + **dokimos** = tested and thus reliable or acceptable) that which will not satisfy a test referring to that which is rejected after a trial or examination because it fails the test. It means to put to the test for the purpose of being approved, but failing to meet the requirements. The basic meaning of **adokimos** is that of *failing to meet the test* or *not standing the test*. It describes that which does not prove itself to be such as it ought and which is therefore disapproved and useless. For example, "sterile soil" (see Hebrews 6:8 below) is unfit for fulfilling its purpose. In short **adokimos** describes that which is worthless, spurious, unqualified, disqualified, corrupted, not approved. **Adokimos** was commonly used of metals that were rejected by refiners because of impurities. The impure metals were discarded, and **adokimos** therefore came to include the ideas of worthlessness and uselessness.

**Adokimos** - 8x in 8v - Ro 1:28; 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 13:5, 6, 7; 2Ti 3:8; Titus 1:16; Heb 6:8. Translated in NAS - depraved(1), disqualified(1), fail the test(2), rejected(1), unapproved(1), worthless(2).

**Constable** who is one who holds that Paul is not speaking of genuine salvation but of subsequent sanctification in 2Cor 13:5 and alludes to Paul's use of **adokimos** in support of this premise, writing that...

**Fail the test** translates the Greek word **adokimos** (disqualified) which *everywhere* else in the New Testament refers to Christians. (**Ed**: Italics mine for emphasis).

**Comment**: Constable's statement is not correct, for in fact the first NT use of **adokimos** refers to rank pagan unbelievers in Romans 1:28+ (see below, cf also 2Ti 3:8+ which again clearly does **not** refer to believers)! So clearly Paul's use of **adokimos** in 2Cor 13:5 does not support the premise that this passage refers solely to genuine believers at the exclusion of an admixture of some "counterfeit" believers (non-believers).

In relation to God, the rejecting mind becomes a rejected mind (Ro 1:28) and thereby becomes spiritually depraved, worthless and useless. Thus Paul records

And just as they did not see fit (**dokimazo**) to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a **depraved (adokimos)** mind, to do those things which are not proper. (Romans 1:28 -note)

**Comment**: "Depraved mind" is more literally a "disapproved mind" or a mind which is no mind and cannot discharge the functions of one, and most specifically a mind in which the divine distinctions of right and wrong are confused and lost, so that God's condemnation cannot but fall on such an individual at the final judgment.

Of unbelievers, Jeremiah wrote,

They call them **rejected** (Lxx = apodokimazo in perfect tense) silver, because the Lord has rejected (Lxx =

apodokimazo in aorist tense) them (Jer 6:30).

The mind that finds God worthless becomes worthless itself. It is debauched, deceived, and deserving only of God's divine wrath. The sinful, depraved mind says to God, "Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Thy ways."

In Titus 1:16 (note) we again see the word **adokimos** describing **unbelievers**, those who masquerade as professors but not possessors of Christ...

They (present tense = continually) profess to know God, but (strong **contrast**) **by their deeds** they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed.

**Comment:** These professor's practices (deeds) are "proof positive" that their profession is positively preposterous and their destiny is the Lake of fire! Those teachers who teach the false and damning doctrine that deeds have no place in assessment of authenticity of one's salvation find verses such as this one in Titus difficult to explain!

**Adam Clarke** writes that these men are... "Adulterate; like bad coin, deficient both in the weight and goodness of the metal, and without the proper sterling stamp; and consequently not current. If they did a good work, they did not do it in the spirit in which it should be performed. They had the name of God's people; but they were counterfeit. The prophet said; Reprobate silver shall men call them." ([Ref](#))

**Adokimos** was used to describe a counterfeit coin that fell below the standard weight, the worthless money being called adokimos. The word also was used of counterfeits of various sorts. **Adokimos** was used to describe a cowardly soldier who failed the test in the hour of battle. **Adokimos** described a candidate for office who the citizens regarded as useless. Finally a stone rejected by builders because of a flaw which made it unfit for construction, the rejected stone being clearly marked by a capital **"A"** (for adokimos) on it's surface.

It is as if these **unsaved men** in Titus 1:16 **profess** Christ but in actuality **deny** Him and in a figurative sense have a giant **"A"** stamped on their head and heart. They have failed the test and unless they come to true repentance and faith will be rejected by the Master Architect and are of no eternal value to Him in building His kingdom. This should break our hearts that men and women are so deceived. Doubtless they will be among the

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' (What is the implication? They will think that during their life they "passed the test"! And yet they are deceived.) will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

The man whose influence is ever towards that which is **unclean and unholy and ungodly** is like those in Titus 1:16 and thus of no use to God or to his fellow man no matter how externally pious or righteous or "religious" he might appear. A perfect example is that of the life of the great saint **John Wesley** who for many years **professed** to be a Christian and yet when he truly **examined himself** (being prompted to do so by the supernatural disposition of a group of Moravian believers) came to realize that he was not **in the faith** as illustrated by this brief excerpt from his sermon entitled [The Almost Christian](#)

I did go thus for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew (abstain from) all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavoring, after a steady seriousness of behavior, at all times, and in all places: and God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Yet my own conscience bears me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but almost a Christian." (I encourage you to take a moment and read Wesley's full very **pithy** sermon [The Almost Christian](#) who became an "Altogether" Christian! [See also notes](#) on Acts 26:28)

**Jim Eliff** has an article entitled **The Starving of the Church** which he ends with an allusion to 2Cor 13:5. He introduces his article writing that...

We have now come to the fourth of five forgotten doctrines which are related to reformation and revival: The nature of **saving faith** as opposed to **empty faith**. It is my contention that the way in which we have preached a half gospel and the careless way we have received people into our churches have contributed to the need of revival perhaps as much as any other thing. Only a wide-scale reformation of thinking can abate this excessive

accessing of unsaved persons into our churches. We have made a large and comfortable portal into our churches and "many there be that enter thereby..."

... Let us concentrate now on this startlingly clear out birth of true faith—its fruit.**J. C. Ryle** wrote of the preaching of the Great Awakening in his book printed in 1885 titled *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*. In his explanation of their sermon content he stressed just what we have been saying all along:

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the inseparable connection between

**true faith and personal holiness.**

They never allowed for a moment that any church membership or religious profession was the least proof of a man being a true Christian if he lived an ungodly life. A true Christian, they maintained, must always be known by his fruits; and these fruits must be plainly manifest and unmistakable in all the relations of life. "**No fruit, no grace,**" was the unvarying tenor of their preaching (p. 28, *Banner of Truth Trust*, reprint, 1978).

[\(The Starving of the Church-IV - Reformation and Revival 01:4, Fall, 1992\)](#)

**Ed:** This is an interesting, thought provoking article which discusses such topics as "Unregenerate Church Membership", six counterfeit faith experiences, the relationship of holiness and faith, "Is holiness guaranteed?", "What about sin?", et al (Bolding added)

**Albert Barnes...**

The word rendered "reprobates," (adokimoi,) means, properly, not approved, rejected; that which will not stand the trial. It is properly applicable to metals, as denoting that they will not bear the tests to which they are subjected, but are found to be base or adulterated. The sense here is, that they might know that they were Christians, unless their religion was base, false, adulterated; or such as would not bear the test. There is no allusion here to the sense which is sometimes given to the word reprobate, of being cast off or abandoned by God, or doomed by him to eternal ruin in accordance with an eternal purpose. Whatever may be the truth on that subject, nothing is taught in regard to it here. The simple idea is, that they might know that they were Christians, unless their religion was such as would not stand the test, or was worthless.

**Henry Morris** explains that a **reprobate** is "one who has failed a proof test. It does behoove anyone who is doubting and disobeying God's Word to examine carefully the reality of His professed conversion to Christ. Every professing Christian needs to **"give diligence to make your calling and election sure"** (2Pe 1:10-**notes** See also Morris' note - This divine call and election in no way are contingent on human effort, either to obtain salvation or to retain salvation. See **notes** on 1Pe 1:2-5. The addition of these Christian graces is the natural outgrowth of the divine nature of which we partake; if they are not being cultivated, there is cause for examining the reality of our professed faith to be sure that we truly are trusting in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ). ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Marvin Vincent** on "**reprobate**" "An unfortunate translation. A reprobate is one abandoned to perdition. The word is kindred to the verb prove, and means disapproved on trial.

**Easton's Dictionary** defines **reprobate** as

That which is rejected on account of its own worthlessness (Jer 6:30; Heb 6:8; Gr. adokimos, "rejected"). This word is also used with reference to persons cast away or rejected because they have failed to make use of opportunities offered them (1Co 9:27; 2Co 13:5, 6, 7).

The 1915 version of the **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** has a longer definition of **reprobate**...

This word occurs in the English Bible in the following passages: Jer 6:30 (RV "refuse"); Ro 1:28KJV; 2Co 13:5,6,7; 2Ti 3:8KJV; Titus 1:16KJV. In all these cases the Greek has adokimos. The same Greek word, however, is found with other renderings in Isa 1:22KJV ("dross"); Pr 25:4KJV ("dross"); 1Co 9:27KJV ("castaway" RV). The primary meaning of adokimos is "not-received," "not-acknowledged." This is applied to precious metals or money, in the sense of "not-current," to which, however, the connotation "not-genuine" easily attaches itself. It is also applied to persons who do not or ought not to receive honor or recognition. This purely negative conception frequently passes over into the positive one of that which is or ought to be rejected, either by God or men. Of the above passages 1Co 9:27 uses the word in this meaning. Probably Ro1:28, "God gave them up unto a reprobate mind" must be explained on the same principle: the nous of the idolatrous heathen is permitted by God to fall into such extreme forms of evil as to meet with the universal rejection and reprobation of men. Wettstein's interpretation, "an unfit mind," i.e. incapable of properly performing its function of moral discrimination, has no linguistic warrant, and obliterates the wordplay between

"they refused to have God in their knowledge (ouk edokimasan)," and "God gave them up to a reprobate (= unacknowledged, adokimos) mind." Even Titus 1:16, "unto every good work reprobate," affords no instance of the meaning unfit, but belongs to the following rubric.

The close phonetic resemblance and etymological affinity of dokimos to the verb dokimazo, "to try," "test," has caused the notion of "being tested," "tried," and its opposite of "being found wanting in the test" to associate itself more or less distinctly with the adjectives dokimos and adokimos. Thus the more complex meaning results of that which is acknowledged or rejected, because it has approved or not approved itself in testing. This connotation is present in 2Co 13:5,6,7; 2Ti 3:8; Titus 1:16; Heb 6:8KJV. In the first two of these passages the word is used of Christians who ostensibly were in the true faith, but either hypothetically or actually are represented as having failed to meet the test. "Reprobate unto every good work" (Titus 1:16) are they who by their life have disappointed the expectation of good works. The "reprobate (rejected) land" of Hebrews 6:8 is land that by bearing thorns and thistles has failed to meet the test of the husband man. It should be noticed, however, that adokimos, even in these cases, always retains the meaning of rejection because of failure in trial; compare in the last-named passage: "rejected and nigh unto cursing." ([Reprobate - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

**John Piper** in his book *the Godward Life* writes...

O how serious is this matter of authenticity in the Christian life! A decision for Christ is not nearly so crucial as a life for Christ. Only reality counts with God. So let us learn three lessons:

- (1) "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves" (2Corinthians 13:5),
- (2) "Enter by the narrow gate... For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:13, 14, RSV), and
- (3) "You will know them by their fruits!" (Matthew 7:16), which is not justification by works but the indispensable evidence of justification by faith.

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**If we were left to ourselves** (William Secker, ["The Consistent Christian"](#) 1660) "What makes you better than anyone else?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

Reader, are there not the same lusts lodging in your heart—which are reigning in wicked men's lives? The reason why there is so little self-condemnation, is because **there is so little self-examination**. If we were left to ourselves but for a moment—we would destroy ourselves in that moment! We can defile ourselves—but we cannot cleanse ourselves. The sheep can go astray alone—but can never return to the fold, without the assistance of the shepherd. "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117

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The following is an excerpt from [The Christian Soldier, or Heaven Taken by Storm](#) by Thomas Watson, 1669 - A practical handbook on Christian living, showing the holy violence a Christian is to put forth in the pursuit after glory....

**The fifth duty wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves, is SELF-EXAMINATION.**

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5.

This is a duty of great importance: it is a parleying with one's own heart, Psalm 77:7. "I commune with my own heart." David did put interrogatories to himself. Self-examination is the setting up a court, in conscience and keeping a register there, that by strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition; a bringing one's self to trial. A good Christian does as it were, begin the day of Judgment here in his own soul. Self-searching is a heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the inward parts, the heart, liver, and arteries—just so, a Christian anatomizes himself; he searches what is flesh and what is spirit; what is sin, and what is grace, Psalm lxxvii. 7. "My spirit made diligent search." As the woman in the Gospel did light a candle, and search for her lost coin, Luke 15: 8—so conscience "is the candle of the Lord," Proverbs xx. 27. A Christian by the light of this candle must search his soul to see if he can find any grace there.

The rule by which a Christian must try himself, is the Word of God. Sentimentality and public opinion are false rules to go by. We must judge of our spiritual condition by the rule of Scripture. This David calls a "lamp unto his feet," Psalm 119:105. Let the Word be the umpire to decide the controversy, whether we have grace or not. We judge of colors by the sun. So we must judge of the state of souls by the light of Scripture.

**Self-examination is a great and necessary duty; it requires self-excitation; it cannot possibly be done without offering violence to ourselves.**



## 1. Because the duty of self-examination in itself is difficult:

**1. It is a work of self-reflection; it lies most with the heart** It is hard to look inward. External acts of religion are easy; to lift up the eye to Heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer—this requires no more labor than for a Catholic to count over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to turn in upon his own soul, to take the heart as a watch all in pieces, and see what is defective; this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others—but hard to find out our own.

**2. Examination of a man's self is difficult, because of self-love.** As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters. Every man is ready to think the best of himself. What Solomon says of love to our neighbor is most true of self-love; "it hides a multitude of sins," Proverbs 10:12. When a man looks upon himself in the looking-glass of self-love, his virtues appear greater than they are, and his sins less. Self-love makes one rather excuse what is amiss, than examine it.

**2. As examination is in itself difficult, so it is a work which we are very hardly brought to.** That which causes a backwardness to self-examination, is,

**1. Consciousness of guilt.** Sin clamors inwardly, and men are loathe to look into their hearts lest they should find that which should trouble them. It is little pleasure to read the hand writing on the wall of conscience. Many Christians are like tradesmen who are sinking in their estates; they are loathe to look over their books, or cast up their accounts, lest they should find their estates low: so they are loathe to look into their guilty heart, lest they should find something there which should affright them; as Moses was affrighted at the sight of the rod turned into a serpent.

**2. Men are hardly brought to this duty because of foolish, presumptuous hopes: they fancy their estate to be good, and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass the test.** Many take their salvation on trust. The foolish virgins thought they had oil in their lamps, the same as the wise, Matt. xxv. Some are not sure of their salvation—but secure. If one were to buy a piece of land, he would not take it upon trust—but examine the title. How confident are some of salvation—yet never examine their title to Heaven.

**3. Men are not forward to examine themselves, because they rest in the good opinions of others: how vain this is!** Alas, one may be gold and pearl in the eye of others—yet God may judge him reprobate silver! Others may think him a saint, and God may write him down in his black-book. Judas was looked upon by the rest of the Apostles as a true believer—yet he was a traitor. Bystanders can but see the outward behavior—but they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run on the top of a river—but vermin may lay at the bottom.

**4. Men are hardly brought to examine themselves, because they do not believe Scripture.**

The Scripture says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9. Solomon said there were four things too astonishing for him, that he could not know. Prov 30:19. He might have added a fifth. The way of a man's heart. The heart is the greatest impostor; it will be ready to put one off with seeming grace, instead of saving. The heart will persuade that a slight tear is repentance; a lazy desire is faith. Now because the generality of people do not believe that there is such fallacy in their hearts, therefore they are so slow to examine them. This natural backwardness in us to self-reflection, should cause us to offer the more violence to ourselves in making a thorough investigation and search of our hearts.

O that I might prevail with Christians to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination. Their salvation depends on it. It is the way of a harlot—she is seldom at home, Proverbs 7:11,12. "her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks." It is a sign of an harlot-professor, to be always abroad, spying the faults of others; but is never at home with his own heart. Oh let us try our hearts, as we try gold, by the touch-stone. Let us examine our sins, and finding out this leaven, burn it. Let us examine our grace, whether it be of the right kind. One went into the field to gather herbs, and he gathered wild gourds—and then death was in the pot, 2 Kings 4:40. So many think they have grace, the right herb; but it proves a wild gourd, and brings death and damnation. That we may offer violence to ourselves in this great business of examination, let these few things be seriously weighed.

**1. Without self-examination we can never know how it is with us** If we would die presently, we cannot tell to what coast we should sail; whether to hell or Heaven. It is reported of Socrates, when he was going out of the world, he had this speech, I am now to die, and the gods alone know whether I shall be happy or

miserable. That man who is ignorant of the state of his soul, must needs have the trembling at the heart, as Cain had a shaking in his body. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to what prince we belong, whether to the prince of peace, or the prince of darkness.

**2. If we will not examine ourselves, God will examine us.** He will examine us, as the chief captain did Paul, by scourging, Acts xxii. 24. He will ask the same question as Christ, "whose is this image and superscription?" And if we cannot show him His own image, he will reject us.

**3. There is secret corruption within, which will never be found out but by searching.** "There is in the heart" (as Austin said) "hidden pollution." When Pharaoh's steward accused Joseph's brethren of having the cup, they dared have sworn they did not have the cup in their sack. Little does a man know what secret atheism, pride, and lust is in his heart until he searches.

**4. The great advantage will accrue to us: the benefit is great whichever way things turn.** If upon examination we find that we have not saving grace—then the mistake is discovered, and the danger can be prevented. If we find that we have saving grace—we may take the comfort of it. How glad was he who had "found the pearl of great price?" He who upon search finds that he has but the least degree of grace, is like one who has found his box of evidences; he is heir to all the promises, and in a state of salvation!

And that we may go on the more successively in this work, let us desire God to help us to find out our hearts, Job 34:32. "That which I see not teach you me."—Lord, take off the veil; show me my heart; let me not perish through mistake, or go to hell with hope of Heaven. "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." Psalm 139:23-24.

## Torrey's Topic Self-Examination

### Self-Examination...

- Enjoined 2Cor 13:5
- Necessary before the communion 1Cor 11:28
- Cause of difficulty in Jer 17:9
- Should be engaged in
- With holy awe Psalms 4:4
- With diligent search Psalms 77:6, Lam 3:40
- With prayer for divine searching Psalms 26:2 Psalms 139:23, 24
- With purpose of amendment Psalms 119:59, Lam 3:40
- Advantages of 1Cor 11:31 Gal 6:4 1John 3:20, 21, 22

**Nave's Topical Bible** adds these general Scriptures concerning self-examination - Job 13:23, Ps 19:12 Ps 26:2 Ps 119:59 Hag 1:7 Mat 26:22 Mark 14:19 1Co 11:27, 28, 31 Gal 6:3, 4, 5

**Other passages:** Mt 7:5, Mt 25:7, Lk 6:42, 22:23, Acts 20:28

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**"What Is the State of Your Soul, My Friend?"** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.—2 Cor. 13:5. One day, as Felix Neff was walking in a street in the city of Lausanne, he saw, at a distance, a man whom he took for one of his friends. He ran up behind him, tapped him on the shoulder before looking in his face, and asked him, "What is the state of your soul, my friend?" The stranger turned: Neff perceived his error, apologized, and went his way. About three or four years after, a person came to Neff, and accosted him, saying he was indebted to him for his inestimable kindness. Neff did not recognize the man, and begged he would explain. The stranger replied, "Have you forgotten an unknown person whose shoulder you touched in a street in Lausanne, and asked him, 'How do you find your soul?' It was I: your question led me to serious reflection, and now I find it is well with my soul." This proves what apparently small means may be blessed of God for the conversion of sinners, and how many opportunities for doing good we are continually letting slip, and which thus pass irrecoverably beyond our reach. One of the questions which every Christian should propose to himself on setting out on a journey is, "What opportunities shall I have to do good?" And one of the points on which he should examine himself on his return is, "What opportunities have I lost?"—James. (New Testament Illustrations)

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I love **Sammy Tippitt's** books on revival and holiness. Here is a brief excerpt from his book on **Fire in Your Heart ...**

There are many reasons people come into the church today without entering by the highway of holiness. Many seek a feeling rather than the Lord God Himself...

Two young people at the Communist Youth World Festival were converted instantly when they made this statement: "Ich glaube an Jesus" (I believe in Jesus). These two young lives were completely transformed when they made that statement. However, many people in Western Europe and the United States will say, "I believe in Jesus," but very little change, if any, is seen in their lives. What is the difference?

When those two East German you said, "I believe in Jesus," they knew they could lose their educational and economic opportunities in life. But they really believed in Jesus. They believed in His life, death, burial, and resurrection so much that they were willing to forsake all opportunities in this life in order to know Him and follow Him.

When someone in the West says, "I believe in Jesus," it can mean very little. It is usually socially and culturally acceptable to make the statement. But too often there is no repentance, no forsaking of the old life to follow the New-Life Giver, Jesus Christ.

The need in Western civilization is for holy men to proclaim Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior. We need men who will not compromise but will call the nations to repentance. **George Whitefield** in 1739 said,

I love those that thunder out the word! The Christian world is in that deep sleep. Nothing but a loud voice can waken them out of it!

We need the courage, the commitment, and the message of the 18th century to again permeate the 20th-century church.

Historian **J. C. Ryle** listed seven characteristics of the messengers during the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century:

- 1. They taught the supremacy of Holy Scripture.**
- 2. They preached the total corruption of human nature.**
- 3. They taught that Christ's death upon the cross was the only satisfaction for man's sin.**
- 4. They preached the doctrine of justification by faith.**
- 5. They taught the universal necessity of heart conversion and new creation by the Holy Spirit.**
- 6. They spoke of God's eternal hatred against sin and of God's love for sinners.**
- 7. They preached that there was an inseparable connection between true faith and personal holiness. They never allowed for a moment that any church membership or religious profession was the least proof of a man being a Christian if he lived an ungodly life.**

These awakeners continually cried, "No fruit, no grace."

**Jonathan Edwards** believed that every experience of God could be counterfeited except those with an insight into His holiness. ([See his book "Religious Affections" discussed above](#))

An insight into the holiness of God will always produce a life-style of repentance. When one enters upon this highway called holiness, it does not mean that he is perfect. It does mean that he is walking down a road of change. Repentance means a change of heart or a change of mind. Throughout the Christian life we should be continually changed, or conformed, into the image of Jesus Christ.

The revival in parts of Eastern Europe is not a paradise where Christians have now struggle with sin. Revival makes the child of God more aware of the holiness of God, but it does not eliminate the sin problem.

Early in my Christian life a godly minister reached toward me and asked, "Do you see the blemishes on my hand?"

I told him that I could not.

He placed his hand under a light and repeated the question. This time I could see them. Then as he began to move closer to the light, the blemishes became even more evident.

What a perfect example of the true nature of revival! As the light of the manifest glory of God shines in out

hearts, we can see more clearly our blemishes. There is only one thing we can do. Repent. (From the chapter entitled **Holiness - the root of His grace - Part 2**)

**LORD, GIVE US  
GENUINE BELIEVERS  
IN OUR CHURCHES!  
AMEN**

**Joel Beeke** - The reading of good sermons is the most underrated kind of Christian literature on the market today. In former centuries, the reading of sermons was the bulk of the mature Christian's reading diet. Most Puritan books, for example, are sermons edited for print. Sermon reading keeps believers in the Word, matures the soul, and whets the appetite for good preaching. It promotes Christ-centered thinking, **healthy self-examination**, and godly piety in every sphere of life. Though nothing can replace the Word preached, sermon reading has one advantage over preaching—the sermons that made it into print are usually the minister's best! Tolle Lege—"pick up and read" great sermon books, especially those of past centuries that are packed with spiritual meat."

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- See J C Ryle's article - [Self-Inquiry](#)

**Self-Examination  
Jonathan Edwards**

1. Do I manifest an attitude of openness toward God that would invite him to "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts"? (Psalm 139:23-24)
2. Is my heart eager to learn of "any wicked way" in me?
3. Are my motives for self-examination correct—that I might be led "in the way everlasting"?
4. Is it important for me to know whether or not I live in a state of sin?
5. Do I live in the gratification of some lust, either in thought or in deed?
6. Do I live in the omission of some known duty?
7. Am I sinning against the light of my conscience in some way, by going on in known sins?
8. Have I been careful, watchful, and diligent in observing myself for evidence of sin in commission or omission?
9. Have I lived in some way which is inconsistent with my Christian profession, and is not suitable for disciples and followers of Jesus?
10. Have I allowed myself to become blinded by the deceitful nature of habitually gratified sin?
11. Have I invented ways of justifying my sinful practices, calling them by more virtuous titles, or rationalizing them in any way?
12. Do I regularly ask friends and loved ones to show me the faults that I cannot see in myself?
13. Do I overlook some sin in my life because it has become customary to me?
14. Do I allow myself to commit some sin because it is not widely condemned among my fellow-man, or because I see it done by my peers?
15. Am I selective in my obedience? Do I pick and choose which parts of my duty I will perform, neglecting those which are more distasteful to me?
16. Do I set aside time regularly to read and meditate on the Word of God?
17. Have I taken the utmost care to know myself, so that I may compare my thoughts, words, and deeds with the rule of holy Scripture? In what ways does my life agree (or disagree) with what Scripture teaches?
18. Am I doing anything which might be considered a 'grey area'; things that godly brethren would view as a way of sin? When I look upon this with the utmost strictness, can I see any sin in it?
19. Do I live in any way that I might regret when I lie upon my death-bed? Is there anything I am doing that I would not want to be caught doing if Christ were to return that moment, or I should be taken out of this world and into eternity?
20. Do I consider carefully what others (both friends and foes) say of me and to me, to discover whether I might be living in any way of sin?
21. When I see faults in others, do I make use of the opportunity to examine myself, to see if there is the same fault in me?
22. When I see another who is blind to his own sin, do I look to see if I am also blind to this same sin?
23. Do I live in some way which profanes the Sabbath-day?
24. Do I profane the Sabbath-day by conducting avoidable worldly business?
25. Do I engage in speech which is not fitting for the Lord's Day?

26. Do I squander the opportunity afforded me to seek God and salvation in greater measure, because of vain, earthly pursuits I am accustomed to on this day?
27. Do I slight the Sabbath by often coming late to church?
28. Do I avoid participation in the ordinances of my church for some reason?
29. Do I participate in worship by singing with heart and voice? (John 4:23-24; cf. Matthew 15:8)
30. Am I frequently distracted during church, allowing my mind to wander freely?
31. Do I spurn the message of God's herald by allowing myself to sleep in church?
32. Am I guilty of allowing scandals to exist within the body of Christ?
33. Do I harbour and maintain a sin which is dear to me, hiding it from the eyes of the world and ignoring conscience? (Numbers 32:23; Hebrews 4:13)
34. Do I neglect the duty of regular, private, prayerful reading of the Word of God?
35. Do I gratify some sensual lust, either openly, or by relishing the thought of it in my mind? Do I somehow cultivate an appetite for carnal things?
36. Do I allow myself to indulge in sinful anger?
37. Do I live in hatred or ill will towards my neighbour? Do I rejoice at his misfortune?
38. Do I live in envy of my neighbour's prosperity, wealth, or honour among men?
39. Do I cheat and defraud those with whom I deal?
40. Am I trustworthy, dependable, and truthful?
41. Do I pay the debts I owe in a timely fashion?
42. Do I oppress anyone?
43. Do I take advantage another's necessity as an opportunity for selfish gain?
44. Am I always honest when buying and selling goods and services?
45. Have I left any wrong unrepaired, or failed to reconcile a relationship which has been damaged? (Matthew 5:23-24)
46. Do I show the love of Christ by helping my neighbour in his time of need?
47. Do I take necessary steps to reprove my brother who is in sin, first privately, then openly, in accordance with Scripture? (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1)
48. Do I entertain the company of lewd and immoral persons?
49. Do I speak evil of others in gossip, slander, or flattery, or entertain such speech in conversations with others?
50. Do I accept the ill report of another concerning my neighbour, without going to my neighbour to confirm the truthfulness of the report being circulated about him, and give him an opportunity to learn of it and vindicate his good name?
51. Do I speak evil by lewd talk and coarse jesting, or entertain such speech in conversations with others? (Ephesians 4:29)
52. Am I two-faced and disingenuous in my conversations with parties who are in disagreement over some issue?
53. Am I strictly truthful in my conversations with others? Do I allow myself to shade the truth or exaggerate?
54. Do I behave in any manner which does not exemplify Christ among the members of my household?
55. Do I love the members of my household to a degree commensurate with their near relation to me?
56. Have I caused or furthered any contention among my familial relationships?
57. Am I honoring the marriage covenant by cultivating my relationship with my spouse?
58. Have I sought to perform all those duties to which Scripture calls me, by humbly serving my spouse with deliberate diligence?
59. Do I maintain any bitterness toward my spouse, even if it seems justified?
60. Am I easily irritated with my spouse or other family members?
61. Do I study my spouse so that I may suit myself toward her needs, temperament, and comfort? Or do I live to please myself first?
62. Do I govern my wife imperiously, in an unbiblical authoritarian manner?
63. Do I neglect the regular and diligent instruction of my children, overlooking this as a duty of the utmost importance?
64. Is my discipline of my children fair, consistent, and effective? Does it combine the elements of correction and instruction? Is it done in a loving manner?
65. Do I undermine my spouse's attempts to discipline my children in any way?
66. If a child, do I honor my parents by obeying them without protest? Do I accept their counsels and reproofs willingly? Do I harbor a rebellious attitude toward them?
67. If a child, do I despise my parents for their weaknesses and shortcomings?
68. Do I honor my parents in their old age?
69. Does my conscience accuse me that I am living in any way of sin?
70. Do I bear fruits which are consistent with a genuine profession of faith?
71. Is grace flourishing in my soul? Is it growing and strong, or languishing?
72. Has some habitual sin in my life paved the way for a greater sin?
73. Is some habitual sin causing me to live in a spiritually darkened state, with cold affections toward Christ, in which I am grieving the Holy Spirit and inviting desertion by God?



74. If I am in a doubting condition, could it be caused by some sin I have not forsaken?  
75. If I am in adverse circumstances, could some sin be the cause of it?  
76. If I fear suffering, illness, or death, could it be caused by some habitual sin that I have not forsaken?

## Self-Examination James Smith, 1842

"Let us search and try our ways — and turn again to the Lord." Lamentations 3:40

Affliction calls us to reflection, self-examination, and prayer. It is . . .

- a solemn pause in the discourse of human life;
- a short stop in the pilgrim's journey.

The Lord calls us aside, and says to us, as Jesus to His disciples, "Let us go aside into a desert place and rest awhile."

Look back, believer, upon the ways in which your God has led you; review His dealings with you; look at your conduct in reference to Him. Search your ways. What course have you been pursuing prior to this afflictive dispensation? What spirit have you manifested? What have you been habitually aiming at? Try your ways. Try them by the precepts of God's holy word. Try them by your professions; by the examples of holy men; try them by the character you have to sustain.

Have you been doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with your God? Has your conduct declared plainly, that you seek a country, a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God? Have you been walking after the Lord — or contrary to Him? Have you been setting your affections on things above — or minding earthly things? Have you been laying up for yourself treasures in Heaven — or laboring more especially for the food that perishes? Do not put away the questions — but search and try your ways.

Has the Lord reason to say to you, "O my people, what have I done unto you? How have I wearied you? Testify against me. Have I been a wilderness unto you? a land of darkness? Why have you so backslidden from me? "

Turn again to the Lord — He invites you back! He acknowledges that you have done evil things as you could — but He says, "Yet now return unto me." Turn to Him with confession of sin, mourn over your follies and transgressions, and bemoan yourself before Him. Turn to Him with all the heart, not insincerely.

He says to you, "My son, give me your heart! This sickness is sent to demand it, surrender it without hesitation, surrender it without reserve.

As a Father — I ask your love!

As a Savior — I ask your confidence!

As a Friend — I, ask your company!

As a God — I ask your entire dedication to my service and praise.

You have deserved wrath — but you shall find mercy!

You have merited condemnation — but you shall obtain remission!

You may expect banishment — but you shall be accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of my grace."

He says to you, "I have blotted out your sins as a cloud, and your iniquities as a thick cloud! Return unto me, for I have redeemed you. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God — and he who confesses and forsakes His sin, shall find mercy. Will you not from this time cry unto me, My Father, you are the guide of my youth? Return, O backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

What can be more precious? How can mercy be more free? He imposes no hard conditions, He requires no costly sacrifice, He says, "Confess — and be pardoned; ask — and be blessed; receive — and be holy; obey — and be happy." Oh say unto Him, Behold, Lord, I come unto you; for you are the Lord my God. Then you may sing:

Instructed now I bow,  
And own your sovereign sway;  
I turn my erring footsteps back

To your forsaken way!

## Self Examination

### James Smith, 1859

"Let a man examine himself" 1 Corinthians 11:28

These are two extremes apparent among professors of religion, some are always in doubt and fear, never satisfied of their adoption, or for long, rejoicing in their union with Christ: others are satisfied with the slightest evidences, and go on securely making sure that they are right. Such are too secure. To such the apostle would say, "Examine yourself whether you are in the faith." To be always in an unsettled state is wrong—but never to examine ourselves, in order to be sure that we are right, is equally so. Let us for a few moments, attend to this business of self-examination; and we propose three questions—

First, Into what should we examine?

Into the foundation of our hope, on what we are building for eternity? That we have some foundation, there can be no doubt—but is it God's foundation? That we are resting on something there can be no question—but are we resting on Christ, and on his finished work alone? Have we been stripped of everything of our own? Have we been brought away from all dependence on anything we have done, or can do; anything we have felt, or can feel? For it is as wrong to build on the work of the Spirit within us, as to build upon works done by us. The person, obedience, and sacrifice of Jesus alone, is the foundation God has laid for us to build our hopes upon.

Then, from what does our satisfaction and pleasure arise? Does our satisfaction arise from what the Lord Jesus has done for us, and what the Holy Spirit has wrought within us? Or, in other words, Do we feel a solid satisfaction within, arising from the persuasion, that Christ has procured us a title to glory by his obedience unto death; and the Holy Spirit has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light? And, is communion with God, a sense of our acceptance with God, and being actively employed for God, a source of pleasure to us?

Again, what do we possess to prove the reality, the vitality of our religion? Have we the life of God in our souls? Does that life aspire to be like God, and urge us to seek deeper and deeper fellowship with God?

Have we spiritual light? That light which discovers to us more and more our own depravity, our need of Jesus, and the emptiness and vanity of this present evil world.

Have we living faith? The faith which looks to Christ for all, goes to Christ with all, and consecrates the person, his talents, and possessions, entirely to Christ.

Have we a good hope through grace? An expectation of sharing with Christ, in all his future glory, simply through free grace. An expectation, raised by the promises, resting on the perfect work of Jesus, and saving us from apostasy and desperation.

Have we peace with God? Peace which flows from reconciliation, proves our justification, and prepares us to brave the difficulties, and encounter all the troubles of our earthly pilgrimage.

Have we love to God? Love to God for his love to us, for all the blessings he has conferred upon us, and for the bright prospects he has opened before us. Love to God in Christ, for his divine excellencies, pre-eminent beauty, and intrinsic glories.

Once more, have we the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts? Have we received the Spirit as the Comforter, testifying of Christ unfolding the excellency of Christ, and witnessing to our interest in Christ? If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, in some measure, or degree—he is none of his.

These then are the points into which we should examine.

Second, By what should we examine ourselves?

By the word of God, which is the infallible standard of right and wrong.

Let us look at the promises, to whom are they addressed? To those, who seek the Lord—who hunger and thirst after righteousness — who mourn in Zion—who are peace-makers—the meek—the poor and needy—who endure temptations—who overcome enemies and oppositions, who are faithful unto death.

Look at the descriptions given of the Lord's people. They are a poor and an afflicted people. They thirst for God, for the living God.

They live by the faith in the Son of God, they walk by faith, and by faith they stand. They worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. They bear fruits, even the fruits of holiness, and the fruits of the Spirit.

Look at the precepts. They do not come up to these—but they approve of them, admire them, and even delight in the law of God after the inward man.

We are not to condemn ourselves, if we do not find all the evidences set forth in the word; nor should we rest satisfied, if we do not find any. The work of the Spirit, is a progressive work. Besides which, there are seasons when our evidences are beclouded. At one time, we may be rejoicing in our adoption, and singing on the heights of Zion; at another time, we may be covered with a cloud, and have scarcely one evidence left. There are seasons, when, if it were not said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" we would have no confidence at all.

We must not therefore judge hastily or rashly—but examine ourselves cautiously, and carefully, by God's most holy word. This then is the rule of judgment, the light by which we are to examine ourselves.

Third, When should we examine ourselves?

Before we take it for granted that we are Christians, or appropriate to ourselves the children's property. If we claim to be considered Christians—then let it be as the result of a close examination of the state of the heart and life; and of a careful comparing of ourselves with God's word.

Let us examine ourselves, before we make a public profession of Christ. If we profess to be Christ's, and publicly take upon ourselves the name of Christ, and identify ourselves with the cause of Christ—we should be prepared to give everyone that asks us, a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness, and with fear.

Faith in Christ, is an essential prerequisite to the profession of Christ. So when we come to the Lord's table, we should examine ourselves whether we be his disciples or not; whether we have his yoke on us, his Spirit within us, and can discern his body in the elements set before us.

And if laid on the bed of affliction, or tried in any particular way: it is well to search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.

When death is in immediate prospect, self-scrutiny is very befitting, that we may be able to rejoice in the Lord, face the foe with dauntless courage, and move onward towards eternity, looking with confidence to Jesus.

Beloved, have you examined yourself? Have you come to a satisfactory conclusion? If so, let not every little trial or doubt, or suspicion, lead you to question your standing. On the other hand, if there are dark signs, if you can indulge in any sin, if you can allow the lusts of the flesh to reign, or if you can enjoy the world, its pleasures, pursuits, and vanities—then we say to you solemnly, "Examine yourself." Either you are a Christian, or you are not. Everything depends on the right solution of this question. If in Christ, you will resemble Christ, and are saved by Christ. If you have no resemblance to Christ, you are without Christ, and have neither part nor lot in his salvation.

## **THE TRUE CHRISTIAN SELF-EXAMINATION**

**By John Angell James, 1846**

My dear friends,

This address will reach you at the close of one year, or the beginning of another—in either case its congratulations and directions, its admonitions and cautions, will be in season. Bless the God of your mercies that he has guided, protected, sustained, and supplied you during another year of your pilgrimage in the wilderness state! Raise your Ebenezer, and inscribe upon it, "Hitherto the Lord has helped me!" and having given utterance to the fullness of a grateful heart, that you are "the living, the living to praise God," proceed to the work of self-examination. One use we should make of the end of our years, is to consider them as resting places on the hill of life, or stages in its journey, where we should pause, turn round, take out our map, and inquire whether we are on the right road, and what progress we are making.

Another year is opening before you with all its unknown unimagined scenes; it may be your last; and will be to some of you. Could you read the book of destiny, you would find, perhaps, written opposite your name—"This year you shall die!" It is, therefore, a suitable admonition to address to you, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." "For he who will die well and happily, must dress his soul by a diligent and frequent scrutiny; he must in this world—love tears, humility, solitude, and repentance."

**SELF-EXAMINATION** is a duty enjoined upon us both by reason and Scripture. Observe with what vehemence the apostle enforces it, "**Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?**" 2 Cor. 13:5. This, recollect, was addressed to professing Christians, and is an exercise in which all true believers have ever practiced themselves. No one can be really in earnest about the salvation of his soul, who never looks with solicitude into his spiritual state.

There are two ends for which this duty is to be performed—first, to ascertain the sincerity and reality of our religion; and, secondly, its condition. In other words, to inquire whether we be in the faith, and also in what degree we are bringing forth, or neglecting to bring forth, its fruits. Somewhat analogous to what takes place in the conduct of the careful tradesman, who inspects his affairs to find out, in the first place, whether he is solvent; and in the next, what is the amount of his profits, and how, by avoiding past errors, or making up discovered deficiencies, he can increase his prosperity.

So a diligent, watchful, careful professor, is anxious to know not only that he is a Christian, but how his religion can be improved and increased. It is true, some are happily partakers of so large a measure of the well-founded assurance of faith and hope, as to have few doubts about their state; and, indeed, little cause for doubts. They have so much of the spirit of adoption, as constantly to enjoy the witness of the Spirit of God, that they are his children. It is not so, however, with all Christians; and even those with whom it is, may occasionally examine with profit, the state of their souls, if it be only to increase their confidence in the reasons of the hope that is in them.

How momentous is the question, "Am I really a child of God!" What consequences hang upon the decision of such a matter! The very possibility of self-deception here, is truly horrifying. To wake up from the sleep of death in hell instead of heaven, and find that we have made a mistake which requires an eternity fully to understand, and an eternity adequately to deplore! Such a mistake is made, it is to be feared, by multitudes in every age. And when we consider the deceitfulness of our hearts, our proneness to self-love, and the easiness of making a profession in this tranquil age of the church, there is such imminent peril of a fatal error in our own case, as should send us all to our closets, our hearts, our Bible, and our God—to examine whether we "are in the faith." It is a matter which none should take for granted.

If we examine ourselves, it must be by some rule, and the only one of any authority in this case, is the word of God. The Holy Scriptures are the only touchstone which God will acknowledge. These are the balances of the sanctuary; the legal standard in the assay office of heaven; all that will not stand this test must be thrown aside, as reprobate silver. To the law and the testimony, then, must be our appeal. Our faith must be tested by the gospel; our practice by the law; and our spirit and disposition by the mind of Christ. He is the model, the pattern, the measure by which all his followers are to be examined, for both law and gospel are embodied in him.

I will now lay down some RULES and CONSIDERATIONS and CAUTIONS by which this important business must be carried on.

1. Do not examine yourselves only by your own notion of what a Christian is and should be, and be satisfied if you come up to that, because that notion may itself be wrong. Many frame to themselves an exceedingly inaccurate idea of what is included in religion; and yet if they possess this, are quite contented. This is what the apostle calls, "comparing themselves with themselves," and has led in innumerable cases to self-delusion and self-destruction. Before you are satisfied, then, with the conclusion that you answer to your own idea of a Christian, take good care to examine by the Bible whether that idea itself be a scriptural one.

2. Do not examine yourselves merely by the creeds and catechisms, the formularies, rites, and ceremonies of any particular church; or by the sentiments, opinions, and criteria, of any individual uninspired writer; nor be satisfied if you imagine you come up to these standards. Such tests need themselves to be tried, for they are all fallible. The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Christians. Uninspired works may be used with advantage, as helps, but not as infallible standards. (I here recommend an exceedingly valuable little work, entitled, "Am I a Christian, or Aids to Self-Examination," by the Rev. Hubbard Winslow. It contains the celebrated "resolutions" of Jonathan Edwards, and rules for "Growth in Grace.")

3. Do not be satisfied with the good opinion of others upon your spiritual state. Some people are too prone to get rid of their fears and take refuge in the favorable estimate formed of their piety, by those who rank high in their view for judgment and experience. It is more safe, in some cases, to regard the sentiments of those who are prejudiced against us. Your friends cannot see your heart. Their kindness to you and affection for you, may lead them to form the best opinion they can, and their love to you may make them blind to defects which are incompatible with sincere piety, or at any rate, with that which is eminent. Besides, their own religion may be so defective and inconsistent, as to give easy credence, for their own sakes, to the reality of yours. Do not be flattered into self-deception. Let not their ignorant and injudicious adulation, stand between you and the Bible. It is what Scripture says—and not what your friends say—that must determine your state.

4. Do not consider that all is right because you are admitted to church membership upon the examination of a minister, or of a church—and conclude that your Christianity is sincere because your profession has been admitted to be credible. There is a path

leading from the sacramental table, trodden by thousands, to the bottomless pit!

5. Beware of judging of yourselves, by partial and detached views of your conduct. To this we are extremely prone. Ever ready to depart from universal regard to the ways of God, we are disposed to rest on some one action or set of actions, as an evidence that all is well with us, and flatter ourselves on this ground, that we are the servants of Jehovah. It is conceivable that many may be prone from taste, situation, interest, or other circumstances to some one branch of Christian duty, who are lamentably remiss in others, the obligations of which though equally strong and plain, are unfelt and resisted. Self-examination must embrace the whole of the divine law, and the whole of our character. We must examine whether we possess that love to God and holiness which is the principle of all right obedience, and which if it be possessed, makes us willing and anxious to do the whole will of God.

6. Do not in default of present evidence, go back to past experience, and coupling this with perverted views of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, conclude that you are Christians, although there be no satisfactory existing proofs of faith and godliness. When the conclusion is drawn from past, instead of present evidence, and the awakened conscience is hushed again to slumber by the opiate of such a sentiment as, "once a child of God, a child of God forever." The delusion is dreadful, and the consequences are likely to be horrendous and eternal.

7. Do not take up the business of self-examination in order to quiet a conscience, feeling the burden of its guilt, and to free the soul from painful apprehensions of the wrath of God. If you have not known the gospel scheme of salvation by grace, and justification by faith; or having known it, have fallen into sin, and thus lost the peace and comfort of your mind; your duty, and the way to quietness and assurance, is not to set about looking into your heart, and back upon your past conduct, to find out evidences of a state of grace; nor to seek the judgment of others, who in ignorance or in kindness, may endeavor to lull your solicitude and flatter you into a good opinion of your state, by reminding you of former zeal, and telling you that God often in sovereignty withdraws from his people because they cannot bear uninterrupted comfort. But instead of this, to apply at once by faith to the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin. You are to be directed to the cross, and to be required to believe the testimony that Christ will cast out none who come unto him. If this does not relieve you, God has provided no other ground of comfort, and you ought to beware of seeking any other comfort, either from yourselves or from your friends. Self-examination is never to be put in place of the exercise of faith; nor is it intended or calculated to give relief to the burdened sinner, or to restore the comfort of a trembling backslider. A person in either of these states of mind, may gain a short and fitful repose from the supposition that self-scrutiny has disclosed something in their favor, but it is a delusive, and will be likely to be a transient quietude, and like that produced by opiates for the body, it will soon pass off, and leave the spirit more restless and wretched than ever.

8. Do not be satisfied with a conclusion that rests upon the lowest possible degree of evidence in your favor. Our faith is susceptible of various degrees of strength, and its fruits may be brought forth in greater or less abundance. It is a fearful problem for any man to attempt to solve, to try with how little religion he may be a real Christian, and go to heaven. Do not compose yourselves to sleep with the idea, that though you are not so eminent as some others, and even have many glaring defects and inconsistencies, you are right in the main. It may be so; for weak faith, is sincere faith; and little grace, real grace. But how difficult is it for us to determine, when faith is so weak, and grace is so feeble, that they exist at all!

Christ has said, "Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit. So shall you be my disciples." John 15:8. If then the test of discipleship be much fruit, it is unsafe to rest our conclusion upon a little. The more we are conformed to the image of Christ, and the more we have of the mind that was in him, the more decisive is the evidence that we are in the faith. O who that is in any degree alive to the importance of salvation, and to the blessedness of an assured hope of it, will be content with those low degrees of evidence, which leave their possessors ever fluctuating between hope and fear?

9. Enter upon the work of examination with the double purpose of increasing both your joy, and your holiness. Religious comfort, joy, and peace in believing, are of immense consequence, not only to your happiness, but your safety. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Neh. 8:10. "The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." Phil. 4:7. Scriptural joy makes duty cheerful, trials light, temptations powerless, and worldly amusements insipid. It is of importance therefore to increase it; and the self-examination of real Christians, by revealing the evidence of their sincere belief, produces this increase of the joy of faith.

He who examines the state of his heart and life at the conclusion of one year, ought to do it with a view to correct what is wrong, and supply what is lacking, during the next.

10. No one should be satisfied with his own self-inspection, but by earnest and believing prayer, should entreat of GOD to search him also, and to make known to him his real condition. That man knows not the deceitfulness of his heart, nor is he duly impressed with the danger and consequences of self-deception, who does not occasionally with intense solicitude, present the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24.



Ask, then, afresh, and with deep solemnity at the close of the present, or at the beginning of the next year, the momentous question, "Am I a sincere Christian—or only a professor?" Set apart an additional hour, to inquire into this great subject. O what are all other questions compared with this, but as the small dust of the balance? By all the value you bear for your soul, or your soul's salvation, I entreat you in the most solemn manner, to take up this matter, and spread it before the Lord in prayer. Take the following questions as a test—

- Have you a consciousness that you really believe in Jesus Christ, and are depending upon him, and him alone, for salvation? 1 John 5:10.
- Do you bring forth the fruits of faith, which are the fruits of the Spirit, as set before us by the apostle? Gal. 5:6, 22-25. Acts 15:9. 1 John 2:15; 5:4.
- Do you love God supremely, practically, habitually? 1 John 5:1-3.
- Do you love the children of God, for God's sake? 1 John 3:14.
- Are you complying with the apostle's direction in 2 Peter 1:5-10? On what principles do you act—those of the world or of the Bible? What is your predominant object, time or eternity—the world or salvation? 1 Cor. 4:18. Do you deny yourself for Christ's sake, or are you seeking only self-gratification? Matt. 16:25, 26.
- How do you employ your talents of property, intellect, influence? For God or self? Rom. 14:7-9. 1 Cor. 6:20. Phil. 1:21.
- How do you bear your afflictions? With submission or repining? Rom. 5:3.

For a more minute and lengthened test of religious character, I refer you to my work, entitled, "The Christian Professor," where, in the chapter on "The Self-deceived Professor," you will find much to direct and caution you.

But I will now suppose the great question settled, and that you have no serious reason to doubt that you are "in the faith;" still you have to examine into the degree and state of your religion—for it may be very defective, where it is real. In what condition then are you come to the close of the year? You were exhorted at the commencement of it, to make it a year of improvement, and great increase of holiness. Have you done so? Has the exhortation of your pastor been complied with? Have you sought and obtained an increased effusion of divine influence? Has the heavenly shower come down in its season? Have the dispensations of Providence, both in a way of judgment and mercy, been sanctified? Have you improved well your sabbaths, fifty-two more of which have been numbered to you? Where is the fruit of all the sermons you have heard? What are you the better for the renewed culture you have enjoyed? I dare challenge you, and ask you if I have remitted anything of my labor, fidelity, and anxiety for your welfare. Yes, have I not added to it? Have I sought to please you or to PROFIT you? Have I shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God? Am I not clear from the blood of all of you, if unhappily you should perish?

Well, my dear friends, examine your conduct during the past year. Inquire how you have sustained your various relations, and have discharged your various duties. Masters and mistresses, have you been kind to your servants, just as to their wages, watchful over their souls? Servants, have you been honest, diligent, obedient, respectful, devoted? Fathers, have you kept up family religion with punctuality, seriousness, and affection, being careful of the spiritual welfare of your children? Children, have you been obedient, loving, dutiful? Tradesmen, have you been just, generous, true, faithful to your covenants, and considerate of your work-people? You rich, have you been liberal, humble, heavenly? You poor, have you been contented, submissive, trustful? You aged, have you been cheerful, weaned from the world, a godly example to the young? You young, have you been modest, active, useful? As professors, have you been careful to avoid little sins, to maintain a tender and enlightened conscience, a brotherly feeling, and a spirit of charity? All these topics should become matter of self-examination—here is a wide field of inquiry; traverse it all. You must come behind in no duty, but go on unto perfection.

Do not think, however, that self-examination is only an occasional duty. It should precede every approach to the Lord's table, "Let a man examine himself," says the apostle, "and so let him eat." It should be interwoven with all our reading of the Scriptures, and hearing of the gospel; and, indeed, with the whole series of our actions. It should be a nightly exercise at the close of each day. Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, said to his disciples, "Let not sleep seize upon your senses before you have three times recalled the conversation and accidents of the day." Seneca, another pagan, said, "At night, when the light is removed, and all is hushed and still, I make a scrutiny into the day, and hide nothing from myself." And now hear the language of a Christian bishop, on the necessity of this evening exercise, "If we consider the disorders of every day—the multitude of idle worlds; the great portions of time spent in vanity; the daily omissions of duty; the coldness of our prayers; the indifferences of our spirit in holy things; the uncertainty of our secret purposes; our deceptions and hypocrisies sometimes not known, very often not observed by ourselves; our lack of charity; our not knowing in how many degrees of action and purpose every virtue is to be exercised; the secret adherances of pride, and too forward complacency in our best actions; our failings in all our relations; the niceties of difference between some virtues and some vices; the secret indiscernible passages from lawful to unlawful in the first instances of change; the perpetual mistakings of permission for duty, and licentious practices for permission; our daily abusing the liberty God gives us; our unsuspected sins in managing a life certainly lawful; our little greedinesses in eating, and surprises in the proportions of our drinkings; our too great freedoms and fondnesses in lawful loves; our aptness for things sensual, and our deadness and weariness of spirit in spiritual

employments; beside an infinite variety of cases of conscience that do occur in the life of every man, and in all communions of every life—then shall we find that the productions of sin are incredibly numerous and increasing, and the computations of a man's life intricate and almost inexplicable; and, therefore, it is but reason we should sum up our accounts at the foot of every page—I mean that we call ourselves to scrutiny every night, when we compose ourselves to the little images of death."

By this frequent examination, we shall prevent little sins from growing into great ones, and acts from becoming habits; we shall stop the accumulation of those minor transgressions, which, if they do not become greater ones, diminish the luster of our profession, interrupt our peace, and prey upon our spiritual strength; we shall increase the tenderness of our conscience, promote our watchfulness, make our confession minute, our repentance particular, and greatly advance our holiness.

And now, dear brethren, "yield yourselves to God" afresh at the commencement of another year, "as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:1, 2. "As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. 2:12. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as you know you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet, 1:17-19.

Resolve, by God's grace, this shall be the holiest year, and the most useful one, of your whole life; then will it be the happiest; and even though it should be the last, it will be to your emancipated spirit as the year of release, of jubilee, and eternal salvation!

## **EXAMINE YOURSELF! TEST YOURSELF!**

**(2 Corinthians 13:5-10)**

**By: Sam Storms**

One of the greatest problems we face in the church today is the number of truly born again believers who struggle with the assurance of their salvation. They are burdened with fears that they may have committed the unpardonable sin or that their daily failures indicate the absence of saving grace. Their consciences are tormented by the lingering memory of a tainted past. Anxiety eats away at their hearts like a corrosive acid. They are desperate for some word that will bring assurance to their disquieted souls.

Although it is not my purpose here to provide counsel to those who struggle with assurance, one thing should be noted. Most often people who live in fear that they aren't saved are the ones who need worry about it the least. Unregenerate people couldn't care less about their sin or salvation. They are spiritually "dead" (Eph. 2:1), "darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them" and suffer from "hardness of heart" (Eph. 4:18). They have become "callous and have given themselves up to sensuality" (Eph. 4:19). They are, therefore, insensible to the beauty of Christ and indifferent towards the countless ways in which they violate his will and fail to honor him as God.

That you should be painfully concerned over your sin and distressed by your failure to love and obey Christ as you know you should is precisely why I would feel free to encourage you and reassure your heart that you do, indeed, truly know him as Lord and Savior. It is the stinging conviction of sin that testifies to the Spirit's saving presence in your heart! But I must move on.

If there are many who are saved but think they aren't, even greater is the number who aren't saved but think they are. Having walked an aisle when they were seven or prayed a prayer at the age of twelve, or perhaps on the assumption that living in the U.S. and being raised in a church necessarily entails salvation, these folk presumptuously believe themselves to be Christians whose eternal destiny is set and secured.

D. A. Carson has articulated what we know all too well, that "there are millions of professing believers in North America today (to say nothing of elsewhere) who at some point entered into a shallow commitment to Christianity, but who, if pushed, would be forced to admit they do not love holiness, do not pray, do not hate sin, do not walk humbly with God. They stand in the same danger as the Corinthians; and Paul's warning applies to them no less than to the Corinthian readers of this epistle" (178).

Here in 2 Corinthians 13:5-10, we find the apostle Paul issuing a pointed and passionate call to the Corinthian church. "Examine yourselves," says Paul, "to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Cor. 13:5).

I have a two-fold aim in this meditation and it centers on this statement in 2Co 13:5. Although the broader paragraph (2Co 13:5-10) is important, my focus will be on this single passage.

First, we need to understand how this call for self-examination related to the Corinthians to whom it was originally addressed.

Second, I want us to consider how it applies today, to you and to me.

Paul's exhortation is that they both **"examine"** and **"test"** themselves. What is important to note is that "the means by which the test is performed is Paul himself. Allegiance to him as their apostle is the criterion that determines whether Christ is present in their lives, since Paul is confident that he himself has already passed the test (2Co 13:6). To accept Paul's message of reconciliation is to accept God's message of reconciliation" (Hafemann, 493).

In other words, the test is the degree to which they respond positively to Paul's claim to apostleship and especially to his proclamation of the gospel. He is operating on the assumption that "those in whom God is at work by his Spirit will recognize that Paul's holiness, sincerity, and way of life all derive from the same grace of God that Paul is now calling them to accept (cf. 1:12 with 6:1-2)" (493). This assumption also means that "those in whom Christ is present will not continue in the lifestyles of rebellion characterized in 12:21. Where Christ is, there is a life of growing holiness" (493).

In 1 Corinthians 16:13 Paul urged them to "stand firm in the faith." Now he urges them to examine themselves to see "whether" they "are in the faith" (v. 5). In both cases, "faith" probably refers not to their subjective trust in Christ but to the Christian faith, i.e., those objective truths which constitute the Christian religion, what Jude referred to as "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). As I said, although this is not a direct reference to saving faith in Christ, to be "in" the faith certainly has in view one's theological convictions as well as ethical behavior.

**To "fail" the test is to discover, after self-examination, that Jesus is not, in point of fact, in them** Paul is not talking about the possibility of someone having Jesus in him, only then to apostatize and discover that Jesus is no longer there. His point is this: if the Corinthians are truly Christians, they will realize that Jesus is in them. And if Jesus is in them, they should be led to acknowledge that he is also in Paul, for it was through him that they came to saving faith. Surely there must be some merit to the claims of one who led so many to faith in Christ! In other words, "he will show them that their verdict about themselves will likewise be their verdict about him. That is, however they fare in their self-examination is how he also fares, because they owe their existence in Christ to him" (Barnett, 607).

Certainly Paul believed that the majority of those in Corinth were true believers (see 3:1-3; 6:13). However, although confident that they will "pass the test," the possibility always exists that some may discover that they have "failed." In other words, the reality of self-delusion and false assurance must be faced.

This is where we must turn our focus from the first century to the twenty-first, from the Corinthians and their spiritual state to us and ours. How should we today examine and test ourselves?

Perhaps we should begin where Paul did, with the objective revelatory truths found in God's Word, "the faith" (v. 5), as he put it.

- Are we "in" it?
- Are my beliefs governed by Scripture or by personal likes and dislikes?
- Do I elevate my opinions above God's?
- Most important of all, who is Jesus to me?
- Do I accept Scripture's claim that he is God incarnate, that he lived a sinless life and died a substitutionary death, absorbing in himself the wrath of God I deserved, and that he rose again bodily from the dead?
- Do I set my hope in personal effort and sincerity and the confidence that my good deeds will outweigh or somehow trump my bad ones?
- What is my response to the apostolic message?
- Does it resonate in my heart?
- Do I relish the revelation of Christ about whom Paul and Peter and John and others wrote and for whose name's sake they gave their lives? Am I submissive to their teaching?
- Do I shape my life and recast my beliefs and formulate my choices to conform with the theological and ethical principles they defend?

I must also test and examine myself by determining not whether I sin, because I most certainly do, but how I feel and respond when I sin.

- Am I unmoved and indifferent and cold toward my failures?
- Do I find ways to rationalize what I know is inconsistent with Scripture?
- Do I simply acquiesce to my sinful desires and lusts and illicit longings by saying, "Well, that's how God made me so it can't be wrong. I'm just being me. Surely God can't argue with that!"

In short, writes Carson, "when a person is broken in spirit and contrite before the God of all justice, grace comes and pronounces absolution and grants confidence. But when a person is haughty and arrogant, the product of well-cultivated triumphalism, unconscious of grace or of any need for it, then grace flees and a stern apostle warns, 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves'" (178).

**The last thing I want to endorse is a morbid, introspective obsession with the state of our souls, as if we are called upon each moment to take our spiritual pulse, oblivious and blind to the hurts and needs and desperate condition of those around us. But we must also avoid the opposite extreme that is characterized by presumptuous self-delusion and a proud indifference to the ethical demands of the gospel.**

In conclusion, and most important of all, when I realize that nothing in my life is perfect and that all my beliefs are to some extent flawed and that every effort I make is tainted by selfishness and sin, do I look to Jesus and to him alone, whose life and death and resurrection are my only hope? That is the ultimate test.

Sam (Bolding added)

## Self-examination William Nicholson, 1862

"Let a man examine himself." 1 Corinthians 11:28

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

Self-examination is a duty of great importance, and which requires to be discharged with the utmost care and fidelity. It is a duty sadly neglected. If it were more regarded . . .

- there would be more individual holiness and happiness,
- there would be less formality and apathy in the Church,
- religion would be rendered more attractive to the world.

If a man regularly investigates his secular affairs, he knows his state, and acts accordingly. If he neglects the investigation, the results may be painful.

### **I. The Duty Enjoined. "Let a man examine himself."**

To "**examine**" means to inspect, to make trial, to enter upon a strict inquiry — and, for this purpose, to commence with our own hearts. We are also exhorted to "prove ourselves," to try ourselves as metals are tried: if found pure, they are approved; if not, they are rejected, and esteemed as reprobate. Jeremiah 6:30.

This duty is personal. It begins at home, where the duty is required. Some are apt to examine other people uncharitably and with censoriousness. It is possible for us to see the mote in our brother's eye — when there is a beam in our own!

Let us examine ourselves,

#### 1. As to our acceptance with God.

Have we ever been convinced of our lost estate?

Have we ever felt ourselves to be spiritually helpless?

Has Christ ever been revealed to us as our Savior?

Have we been reconciled to God by faith in him?

Have we ever rejoiced in pardoning love, justifying grace, and the privileges of adoption?

#### 2. As to our faith.

Do we heartily believe the doctrines of the Gospel?

Do we live upon them?

Can we say, like Paul, "I am crucified"? Galatians 2:20.

Are we free from a self-righteous spirit?

Has our faith any fruits or works — to prove its vitality? James 2.

This is a point of such importance as to involve our salvation. If we are in the faith, all the other graces will follow in their train.

If not in the faith, it matters not what else we are, our hopes and our work are all in vain. John 3:36.

3. As to our hope. If faith is right, then hope will be right. Hebrews 11:1. There can be no hope without faith.

Does hope lift up our head in trouble?

Does it deaden us to the world?

4. As to our connection with the Church.

Is the church any better for us?

Are we an honor to it, or an impediment to it?

Do we desire, seek, pray for, and contribute to, its prosperity?

5. As to our behavior in the world.

Are we separate or conformed?

Do we shine in it?

Do we seek its salvation?

6. As to the trials of life.

Do we murmur and repine?

Are we patient?

Do we come out of them as gold refined?

## II. The Manner Self-examination.

1. With solemnity. Self-examination is a weighty affair — the business of the soul. It has an aspect on eternity!

2. By comparison. Compare our disposition, spirit, and conduct — with the preceptive part of God's word — with the examples of Christian conduct recorded there.

3. Impartially. Not attaching too much importance to our infirmities — not apologizing on account of our circumstances. Judge impartially, as in the presence of the heart-searching God.

4. Frequently. When we read and hear the Gospel — apply it.

At the close of each day — on that bed, where, before morning, we may die.

On the Lord's day.

Before attending to the ordinance of the Lord's supper. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.

5. Prayerfully. Invoke God to do it for you, and to suggest to you your duty. Pray for forgiveness — for quickening — for strength — for faith, and vigorous life. "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!" Psalm 139:23-24

## III. The Important Advantages Resulting from the Discharge of the Duty of Self-examination.

It is essential to our growth in grace, our interest, and felicity. We need it. We are so liable to err — to become unwatchful — to neglect our duty.

Self-examination will lead . . .

- to humility,
- to repentance,
- to faith,
- to healthy Christian growth.



Self-examination will warn us of danger, and lead to our deliverance and safety.

The mariner keeps a lookout, throws out his line, makes his observations, and repairs the smallest injuries. Just so, in the voyage of life, a Christian who would not make shipwreck of his faith, must be watchful and diligent, and make it his express business to look into his state, and ascertain his progress.

Self-examination will lead to greater spiritual enjoyment. It will induce preparation for death, and give confidence and hope in the prospect of eternity

## Related Resources

### 2 Corinthians 13:5

#### HENRY MAHAN SERMONS

- [2 Corinthians 13:5 A Saving Faith or a Religious Profession](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:5 Is My Faith Saving Faith](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:5 Testing Our Faith](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:5 True Saving Faith or Religious Profession](#)

#### JOHN MACARTHUR SERMONS

- [2 Corinthians 13:5-6 The Pattern of Sanctification: Authenticity, Part 1](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:5-6 The Pattern of Sanctification: Authenticity, Part 2](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine Your Faith](#)

#### RICHARD BAXTER - 280 page book!

- [THE MISCHIEFS OF SELF-IGNORANCE AND BENEFITS OF SELF-ACQUAINTANCE 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5.](#)