

Attitude Towards Ourselves Part 1 — “Examine Yourselves”

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2 Cor. 13:5

The right attitudes are absolutely necessary. They are necessary for unity in a local congregation.

We studied our attitudes towards God, Jesus Christ, the gospel, the church, and our brethren; now we shall study our attitudes towards ourselves (2-part lesson).

Let us notice some attitudes we need toward/within ourselves.

As Jeremiah lamented over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, he called for the people to examine themselves and turn back to the Lord.

Lam. 3:40-41, *“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.”*

In teaching on the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper, Paul wrote that it was to be a time for self-examination.

1 Cor. 11:27-30, *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”*

Paul later challenged the Corinthians to examine themselves:

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?”*

In doing so, he employs the present tense for the verbs “*examine*” and “*prove*”, indicating that such examination was to be an on-going activity!

This should naturally raise some important questions...

Why should we examine ourselves? By what standard should we examine ourselves? What sort of questions should we be asking ourselves?

In this lesson, I would like for us to focus our attention on this call to “Examine Yourselves”. As we do so, let’s answer the questions already raised, beginning with...

Why should we examine ourselves?

To determine whether we are in the faith.

Paul said in 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?*”

The expression “*in the faith*” refers to being a faithful Christian.

Thus we are to examine whether or not we are remaining faithful to the Lord! We need to remember that the danger of drifting is ever present. It is possible to drift away if we neglect our salvation.

Heb. 2:1-4, “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*”

Preachers in the religious world downplay the gospel of Christ and instead present bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, little sermonettes, and dissertations on psychology, philosophy, current events, and politics. These are not going to convict the world of sin; these are not going to convert souls to Christ.

Many of the religious leaders in the world today do not accept the authority of the scriptures concerning God’s plan of salvation. Even one church of Christ preacher in one church publication that I receive boasted that he preached a full year without mentioning baptism once. This is so unlike the very first sermon taught by Peter when baptism was taught for the remission of sins.

Too many are satisfied to let society influence their gospel rather than letting Christ’s gospel influence their society. Even the churches of Christ have changed over the years. There was a time when all of the churches of Christ met just as we do. Then they fell to the influence of the religious churches of the world and modified many things in the service that were not authorized in the scriptures.

Back in 1925, Bro. George Scott, my grandfather’s brother, went to Northern Rhodesia in Africa and set up a mission. He, with the aid of some others, translated the Bible into the native language. They used only one cup in the communion during their worship services. After 20 years he came back to this country for a visit, and was so disgusted at how much the church had changed in so short a time that he went back

to Africa and stayed until he died in 1955. Many churches of Christ around the world today have drifted further from the gospel since then.

One reason so many of today's youth drift from the church is that they want to be entertained, rather than worship God.

I have to relate an experience I received while attending evening services at another church in our neighborhood of which my wife, Lynell, and I were invited. After services were started, all of the children of various ages were directed to go to their respective classes where a variety of craft activities awaited them. The adults not involved with these activities remained in the auditorium and were "treated" to a stage performance of a musical band, a male singer, and a woman accompanist singer. No song books were available for the "audience" to participate. The music had a lot of "feeling" and beat, but little scriptural value.

The preacher walked among those in the front of the audience when he spoke, touching them or patting them on the shoulder, perhaps to make them feel more "comfortable." He spoke encouragingly for the audience to live a greater life, presenting a number of non-biblical examples. He used only two scriptural references in his discourse, and falsified both of those.

In one of these references he read Ezek. 1:4-6 and said it described the beast that Ezekiel saw, *"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings."* Read the book of Ezekiel and you will see there is a lot more to the description of the beast than this.

For additional entertainment throughout the entire service, an artist on the stage attempted to captivate the audience by painting a huge picture of the beast based on the scripture that was read by the preacher. His rendition was woefully incomplete when compared to the entire description given by Ezekiel. The artist also placed a small image of a person in a lower corner of the painting, depicting Ezekiel staring up at the beast.

The preacher claimed that Ezekiel didn't know what this beast was, but that something that great deserved to be worshipped, so Ezekiel fell down and worshipped it. I thought to myself, "Something is wrong with this picture."

I quickly scanned the entire book of Ezekiel and was not surprised to find that Ezekiel did not worship the beast. In truth, the 10th chapter of

Ezekiel says the beast in Ezekiel's vision was four cherubims. Do you think that if Ezekiel had worshipped this beast, God would have been pleased with him? Remember, God said He was very jealous and commanded that only He was to be worshipped.

This preacher tried to make the service entertaining, but it was not factual.

Lynell mentioned to me that she was uncomfortable being there. I told her that I was not only uncomfortable, but also angry because this preacher was lying to his people. Only two verses in the entire sermon, and they were falsified! It is sad that this is the case throughout the religious world. Are these preachers ashamed of the gospel of God to hide it from their sermons?

Paul said in Rom. 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* He also said in 2 Cor. 4:3, *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”* It is hid because it is entirely lacking in their sermons.

Are these preachers' consciences seared, because they don't seem to care what they do or say as long as they get their desired results? Does this attitude of “the end justifies the means” please God?

When I was a young man in the church, I visited a Baptist gospel meeting with Bro. Howard McCay. During the sermon the preacher taught some assumptions as fact where the Bible was silent. When he offered the invitation at the close of his sermon he said for everyone to close their eyes and anyone that wanted him to pray to God on their behalf to indicate so by raising their hand. I dutifully closed my eyes and bowed my head, and then heard the preacher saying, “God bless you, brother!”, “God forgive you, sister!”, or something similar. He then interjected with, “Now, remember, I want everyone to respect the privacy of others and keep your eyes closed.” Afterward, Bro. Howard told me that he was watching the preacher pronounce his blessings on people where no hands were raised, so he stared into the preacher's eyes defiantly. The preacher's deceit was known, but he still continued his ruse. After the service was over He avoided Bro. Howard. Such deceit is common in the religious world.

Why do so many people accept a watered-down, false religion? It's because they want an undisturbed conscience; so they do not investigate what they are being taught. Whether they realize it, or not, they are being presumptuously disobedient to God and His gospel, and will eventually be lost if they don't change.

- 2 Thess. 1:7-8, “*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- 2 Thess. 2:10, “*And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”*

It is a shame that many would rather listen to an easy, non-judgmental message than listen to the word of God. Paul told Timothy (and to us as well) to preach the word of God, not some message that was to soothe their ears. “*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim. 4:1-4).*

Beware! If any religious man preaches anything and leaves out the word of God, he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It doesn’t matter if it sounds good, or even stirs up the people, that person is a false representative of God.

If any have the attitude that they are discontent with the church of Christ, you better examine closely what your alternatives might be. Any church must match the description of the bride of Christ that we discussed a couple days ago, or else it is not Christ’s bride.

It is possible to develop an evil heart of unbelief. Heb. 3:12-14, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end,*”

What this text implies, however, is that it is possible to KNOW of one’s standing before God. In fact, the Bible was written for this purpose, that we might know.

One book in particular has this purpose in mind. 1 John 5:13, “*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*”

This is an open-book test. We are given the answers. 1 John 3:24, *“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”*

To determine if Jesus Christ is in us.

Paul challenged the Corinthians to consider whether Jesus Christ was in them. That is such a wonderful thought when we think that Christ indwells the Christian.

It was promised by Jesus Himself. John 14:21-23, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”*

It begins when we put Christ on in baptism. Gal. 3:26-27, *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

We may wonder at times “how” He indwells, but the key here is to know that He does! To realize there are ways we can KNOW whether He does! Which is why we need to periodically examine ourselves!

Why should we examine ourselves? To determine if we are “reprobates” (disqualified). 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?”*

It is a given that Christ is in Christians, unless they have become “reprobates”.

What does “reprobates” mean? Here is how some translations read...

- “*ye be reprobates*” (KJV).
- “*you fail the test*” (NIV). (Remember, I said it’s an open book test. We can know if we pass or fail.)
- “*unless indeed you are disqualified*” (NKJV).

Literally, “*not standing the test*”, and in the context it refers to the test of...

- Being in the faith.
- Having Christ in you.

This verse is simply another among many that reveal that a Christian can indeed fall away from grace!

Paul warned of falling from grace. Gal. 5:4, “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law (Law of Moses - EF); ye are fallen from grace.*”

Jesus described what would happen to those branches who did not bear fruit. John 15:6, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*”

Again, through self-examination one can KNOW what his true condition is!

Why should we examine ourselves? To determine if we really know ourselves. As Paul calls for self-examination, he asks “*Know ye not your own selves?*”

We can easily fall into the trap of self-deception. James 1:22-25, “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*”

The religion of such a person is “*vain*” (useless). James 1:26, “*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.*”

Only through periodic self-examination can we avoid deceiving ourselves!

So the need is ever present to “*examine yourselves*”, to “*prove yourselves*”. That leads to the next question...

By what standard should we examine ourselves?

Certainly, not by the estimate of our self. We cannot trust solely upon what we may think of ourselves. We are approved only if the Lord commends us. 2 Cor. 10:18, “*For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*”

Therefore even though we might “*think*” we are right, we are not the final arbitrator.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 4:4, “*For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*”

We can be wrong in our basic assumptions, which can lead to wrong conclusions about ourselves.

Paul had once thought persecuting Christians was pleasing to God, but Jesus told him he was wrong as we read in Acts 26.

There will be many people at the Judgment who thought they were pleasing God during their lifetime.

Matt. 7:21-23, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

We must therefore look for a standard outside of ourselves by which to examine ourselves! We should not use the estimate of other men. We cannot compare ourselves with others, or trust their approval.

To compare ourselves with others is unwise. 2 Cor. 10:12, *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

Paul said the approval of others is a small thing. 1 Cor. 4:3, *“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.”*

People are often wrong in their thoughts and evaluations. The majority will find themselves lost on the Day of Judgment. Matt. 7:13-14, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

We must still look for yet another standard by which to examine ourselves.

We must try ourselves by the standard of God’s word.

Again, it is the commendation of the Lord that makes one approved. 2 Cor. 10:18, *“For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.”*

It is the Lord who is the ultimate Judge. 1 Cor. 4:4, *“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”*

As the Lord Himself has said, we will be judged by His words. John 12:48, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”*

The only appropriate standard to use when we examine ourselves is the Word of God. We cannot trust our feelings, or what others might say.

Finally, let me share some...

Questions to help us examine ourselves.

Is Christ in me?

Have I put Him on in baptism? Gal. 3:27, *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

Am I keeping His commandments?

John 14:21, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”*

Are the “marks” of discipleship present in my life?

Am I abiding in His word? John 8:31, *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;”*

Do I love my brethren like Christ loved me?

John 13:34-35, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

Am I bearing fruit?

John 15:8, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*

- Such as the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22-23, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*
- Such as the fruit of good works. Tit. 2:14, *“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* Tit. 3:14, *“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”*

Do I have the attitude of those who were true disciples?

Under inspiration, Paul wrote 2 Cor. 13:6. What was his frame of mind? 2 Cor. 13:6, *“But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.”*

We can glean the mind of a true disciple (Paul) from his letter to the Philippians: Phil 3:7-14, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

- Now, we read of his goal in life (7-11).
- We read of his attitudes in attaining that goal (12-14). Read these over and study them for they are good examples to live by.

We will ALL have this “*frame of mind*” if we are “*in the faith*” and “*Christ is in us*”. Phil. 3:15-17, *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”*

Let us all have the same attitude that Paul had concerning our Christian walk, constantly examining ourselves that we are on the right path.

Conclusion.

Other questions might be appropriate to ask when examining ourselves, but I hope this illustrates how we need to use the Word of God to “*prove*” ourselves.

Consider the sad plight of those who are “*reprobate*”, “disqualified”, who “fail the test”.

To ensure that you will not be “*disqualified*”, then frequently “*examine yourselves*” in the light of God’s Word!

