

Examine Yourself

by

Ellis P. Forsman

Examine Yourself

by

Ellis P. Forsman

October 11, 2011

Examine Yourselfs

2 Cor. 13:5

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 to see if one is properly discerning the body and blood of the Lord when partaking..

1 Cor. 11:27-31, *“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. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”*

Paul later challenged the Corinthians to: 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 Yourselfs”. 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?*”

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 our 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.*”
- 1 John 2:3, “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*”
- 1 John 3:14, “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*”

- 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 Christ indwells the Christian is a wonderful thought.

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!

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, ASV).
- “*you fail the test*” (NASV, NIV).
- “*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; ye are fallen from grace.*”

Peter likewise warned of falling from one’s own steadfastness. 2 Pet. 3:17, “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*”

Jesus described what would happen to those branches who did not bear fruit.

- John 15:1-2, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more 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.*”

Through self-examination one can KNOW what his true condition is!

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 bridleth not 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?

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. 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 thought persecuting Christians was pleasing to God. Acts 26:9-11, “*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*”

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!

Not by 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."

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."*

Even many religious will be surprised. 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 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."*
- 2 Cor. 5:10, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*

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;”

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 our lips in praising God. Heb. 13:15, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

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. 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”
- 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 from: 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.”*

- We read of his goal in life (7-11).
- We read of his attitudes in attaining that goal (12-14).

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.”*

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”*.

Paul describes some of them in: Phil. 3:18-19, *“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)”*

Because they set their mind on earthly things, their end is destruction!

How much better to be like those described in: Phil. 3:20-21, *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”*

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

The examining of ourselves while partaking of the communion is a different kind of examining. 1 Cor. 11:23:29, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. 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.”*

The examining we are to do here is to examine whether we are thinking about the sacrifice Christ made for us while we partake of the Lord’s Supper. If we are thinking about something else, we are not discerning the Lord’s body and are guilty of His body and blood. This is a very important matter and we should not partake of it lightly.

