

Subject: A Call for Self-Examination, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5

We live in a world full of deception. The worst kind of deception is spiritual deception. Satan is the great deceiver. He wants to deceive you. He is the great counterfeiter. He wants to convince people that they are Christians when in fact they are not Christians. Suppose I have a rotten apple. I could take that apple and dip it in red candy glaze and it would look like a beautiful candy apple, but it would be as rotten as ever on the inside. Without a relationship to Christ, we are rotten on the inside. Coming to church, praying prayers, reading and studying the Bible are just a coat of red glaze on the outside. We must be changed in the depths of our soul. We must be in the faith. We must be in Christ.

***2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

THE DANGER OF SELF-DECEPTION

The purpose of the Scripture is not to promote church attendance. The Scripture is to present the truth. In Scripture we have the presentation of the truth and we also have the contrast of the false. God is concerned about the souls of men. God is concerned that we are saved. He is therefore concerned that we not be misled about salvation. He is concerned that we are not satisfied with a counterfeit Christianity. It is possible to think we are Christians without being Christians.

People who are not Christians often talk about hypocrites in the church. The church is just as concerned about hypocrites as they are. The church never pretends that it is perfect. People have the wrong idea about the church. They think it wants to grow and the only thing that is important is the size of the membership. The Bible is not interested primarily in numbers. It is interested in truth, in reality. The Bible warns us about the false, the counterfeit, the superficial. Jesus gave the parable of the sower and the seed, the parable of the wheat and the tares, and the parable of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. There is nothing more terrifying than for a person to think he is a Christian when he is not.

***Matthew 7:21-23** ²¹ 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. ²² 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? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

***John 2:23-25** ²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, ²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. Here is an example of unbelieving believers. Jesus knew they were not true believers, but apparently they did not know. How can a person be deceived?*

Salvation is not the same as conviction. When Paul spoke to Felix, he trembled. He was stirred but not changed.

Salvation is not the same as outward morality. The Pharisees set the standard of morality but Jesus condemned them. They were starched and pressed, but not cleaned.

Salvation is not the same as religious activity. Jesus will say, "I never knew you."

Salvation is not the same as a temporary response. What makes a person a Christian is not some decision for Christ, but a new birth from God. It is not just an emotional response. It is not walking an aisle or praying a prayer.

Salvation is not the same as mental agreement. The devil believes and trembles, but he is not saved. A person may believe and agree with the truth and yet not be a Christian at all. Salvation is not agreement to facts about Christ. It is a life-changing commitment to Christ.

Salvation is not the same as having a Christian background. You can grow up in a Christian home and yet not be a Christian. Someone says, "I've always been a Christian." No you haven't. What makes deception so dangerous is the nature of the human heart. We so easily want to believe that we are saved when in fact we are not. ***Jeremiah 17:9*** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Salvation is not the same as baptism and church membership. There is a good example of this in Acts 8:9-24. This is the story of Simon the sorcerer, a man who apparently became a Christian, but in fact he was not a Christian at all, as the Scripture reveals. Notice verse 13. Simon believed, was baptized, and continued with Philip.

THE DUTY OF SELF-INSPECTION

How can we know if our faith is true or false? The false always eventually shows itself to be false. Unbelief always gives itself away. False faith is revealed by how we react to things. For example, in the story of Simon the sorcerer, he proved that he was not a changed man at all. His heart was not right (vs. 21-23). He was still worldly minded, and driven by self-interest. Christianity is in the heart. What is the state of your heart? What do you really desire? What do you really hate? This is a short list of things to look for and they all have to do with the heart and the genuine fruit of a changed life.

Do you have a genuine love for God? This includes the fear of God and concern for His glory. Do you love what He loves? Are the things of God a drudgery or a delight? Do you love the Lord? The Bible says, "Unto you who believe He is precious." Is Christ precious to you? Do you love the Lord's Day, the Word of God and prayer?

Do you have a genuine love for others? Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you love the church? Do you love the lost?

Do you have a genuine hatred for sin? Do you have a desire for holiness? Spurgeon said, "I would, if it were possible, have neither eyes, nor ears, nor heart for sin." ***Psalms 97:10*** *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.*

Do you have a genuine desire to obey the Lord? Do you welcome His Lordship and authority over your life? All these things are a matter of the heart. What do you really love and desire?

Do your words reveal a renewed and clean heart? Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. What do you talk about? Do your words reveal a heart of love and grace?

How do you react to persecution or adversity? Jesus said the shallow ground hearer withers and dies when it sprouts because it has no depth.