

08/11/2019

“Are You in the Faith?” Part 2

2 Corinthians 13:5-10

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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. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

The title of our sermon this morning is “Are You in the Faith?” “Are You in the Faith?” This is part two. We’re working through this text in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 5 through 10. So now as we come together, 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 5 through 10, we come back to this text for a second time now to conclude what we began last Lord’s Day. And as we come back to the text we find the Apostle Paul beginning to draw this letter to a close. He’s about to make a third visit to the church and he’s got on his mind that third visit; the importance of it, how he wants it to go, he’s praying that it’s going to go well. He’s extremely concerned about the spiritual condition that he’s going to find the Corinthians in. His second visit to them – second visit to Corinth, was an unmitigated disaster. There are still patterns of sin now that are continuing to plague this church, false teachers are still spreading their ungodly influence among the people, and the relationship of the church to the Apostle Paul himself is still unquestionably strained. And Paul is hopeful as he comes to this point in the letter, he’s hopeful that after the repentance mentioned in chapter 7, after further instruction given them through this letter, through the efforts of Titus who’s now in Corinth ministering among them, that maybe his third visit with them is going to be better than his second.

All that Paul does, all that Paul thinks, all that Paul is writing here is motivated by a love for this church, a love for these people. It is motivated by love. When Paul says he’s going to come and when he comes he will not spare – now to the world that sounds tough, that sounds harsh but listen, that is loving. That is loving the Lord and loving the Lord’s people, loving the Lord’s church. When Paul says he’s going to use sharpness with them – listen, we’ve got to see that, truth be known, that is loving. Loving to God’s people, loving to the Lord. That’s what is necessary in these circumstances. It is motivated by love for this church. It’s loving for Paul to confront them... to confront them..., to comfort them – but to confront them in their sin. It’s loving for Paul to do that. It’s loving for Paul *to convince, to rebuke, to exhort with all long suffering and teaching*. It’s loving for Paul to take the shepherd’s staff in hand and to beat away the wolves that have infiltrated the sheepfold. It’s loving for Paul to speak against those wolves and to do those things. And after all that they have been through together, it’s loving for Paul now, in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, to put them to the test. That’s loving. He tells them, *Examine yourselves as to*

whether you are in the faith. Now why is it loving to do that? It's loving to do that because deception is real and sin is serious. Sin is deadly. Deception is deadly. And Paul serves them and serves the Lord by pointing this out to them. *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.* Why is that? Why is it loving to call someone to examine or even question their faith in the Lord? To question their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? To question whether or not they are even in the faith? "Well, I thought it was easy. All you gotta do is ABC." Right? "Admit. Believe. Confess." No. Anyone who tells you it's as easy as ABC is selling you a bill of goods. Run! Run from that church! There's more to it here than Paul has in mind. It's important to consider. Are you in the faith? Is Jesus Christ in you? Why is it so important? Well, in a word, deception – deception. The very nature of the question reveals that you can be deceived about the state of your own heart, your own soul. Faith can be false. Assurance can be unfounded. And a profession of faith does not always mean the possession of faith, no matter how sincere you may think that you are. If your faith is not genuine, if your faith is not a fruit of a new heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will perish in your sins. You will die eternally in hell. That's what we're talking about. These are high stakes. Life and death. A healthy self-examination – really if you think about it, it's like checking your chute before you're gonna jump out of a plane. Right? It's easier to trust professionals, right? It's easier to trust professionals, professional packers, when they know what they're doing and you know that they're out working to keep you alive. It's easier to trust the professional when you don't know what you're doing. Right? But how careful would you be if you knew that there was an enemy chute packer working against you. Somebody in the back that as the professional was coming through trying to pack that thing correctly, there was an enemy coming along behind him trying to unpack it – trying to tangle it up. Right? How careful would you be? How careful would you be if you knew in your own heart and mind that you were prone to operator error in working the chute? How careful would you be?

Most people today, figuratively speaking, are cramming the chute into a pack themselves and they have no idea what they're doing because they aren't taught well. They don't have any idea what they're doing because they don't rely upon the word of God. They don't go to the Bible for their answers. And so they're cramming the chute into the pack themselves, deceived about the fact that that chute is going to save them; and they're about to jump out of a plane. It's called death. If you jump out of the plane without a chute you're going to die. But they think that they do. They think that they know. They are cramming tissue paper into their pack believing that it's going to hold them up when they jump out of the plane. They believe wholeheartedly. They're sincere in their belief that that is going to save them. And yet when somebody comes along and says, "Hey, look, what you're doing is not going to save you. If you jump with that you're going to die." And they say in response, "Why are you being so judgmental? Why are you judging me?" Right? They become defensive. They become hostile.

Deception. Deception. Paul knows how prone we are to self-deception. He knows how easily we can be deceived into believing that we're saved when we are not. And so Paul confronts them with a pastoral imperative, a command in verses 5 through 6. He says in verse 5, *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.* Asking the question presupposes that there is a way to know. Asking the question presupposes that there is evidence that you could look to for the reality, for the genuineness of your faith. Is your profession real? Is it genuine? Do you have saving faith? You can know. You can know.

Last Lord's Day we looked at Paul's purpose for the command and then we began to consider a personal application. *Examine yourselves.* Are you in the faith? *Test yourselves.* Is Jesus Christ in you? That's the question, isn't it? That's the heart of the issue. Am I in vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ? Is Jesus

Christ in you? I can't think of a more important question. Can't think of a more important question. If you die in Christ you go to heaven to be with Him. If you die without Christ you go to hell, an eternity in torment without Him. To be deceived about this is to be plummeting toward certain death without a chute. With a tissue paper parachute above you. Trusting in something that will not save.

Now being in the faith certainly includes believing the objective content of our faith. It means believing certain facts. Right? Being in the faith certainly includes that. So, you are not in the faith, for example, if you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. If you do not believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ you are not saved. God is the great "I AM". And Jesus said, "*If you do not believe that 'I Am'...you will die in your sins.*" If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, you cannot be a Christian. There is – in other words – there is a necessary and objective content of revealed truth that God calls us to believe. If we don't believe that objective content of our faith, it's something else, but it's not Christianity. Right? It's something else, but it's not faith in Christ. There is an objective content of our faith. However, being in the faith certainly includes more than believing the objective content of our faith. There's more involved.

Paul asks the clarifying question, *Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?* Is the Lord Jesus Christ in you? Is He in you? The Lord points us in the right direction to answer that question. By speaking of his own abiding presence with the believer in John chapter 15, verse 4, where the Lord says this, He says, *Abide in Me, and I in you.* That's the issue. Are you abiding in Him and is He abiding in you? Those things are mutually reciprocal. If Christ is in you, you will abide in Him. Right? If you are abiding in Him, Christ is abiding in you. *Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* Now we have an objective standard for testing whether or not the Lord abides in me and I in Him. What is that? Verse 4. It's fruit. Fruit. Fruit bearing. The Lord says in verse 5, *I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him – what does he do? He – bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

Now why – why is all this abiding in Him and why is all this fruit-bearing important? Verse 6, *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and (they) throw them into the fire, and they are burned.* Now what the Lord is talking about there is eschatological judgment. Judgment. Those fruitless branches are gathered together and at the end of the age are thrown into the fire and are burned. If you do not abide in Him and bear fruit, produced by His Spirit in you, you will perish in your sins.

Now John further clarifies how we know that we have Him abiding in us. 1 John chapter 4, verse 13, *By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.* In other words, if we abide in Him, and He abides in us by His Spirit, then His Spirit will produce those fruits. His Spirit will be at work in us and we will know that we abide in Him, because of the work of His Spirit. In other words, it's not your opinion. "I've got Him abiding in me." Why? "Because I feel warm when I think about Him." That's not what the Bible says. Right? It's not going to be your opinion. It's not going to be your thoughts. It's not some imagination – some figment of your imagination. It's not a feeling. You'll know that He abides in you by the work of His Spirit in you. Right? That's going to be helpful in our objective tests here. *He has given us of His Spirit.* And Paul says this, of the work of the Spirit, in Romans chapter 8, verse 16. Listen to this. *The Spirit Himself (then) bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God – it's the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that tells us we're children of God – and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.*

So, what is all this meaning? What is all this saying? Assurance of your salvation cannot come from any man that tells you you're saved. Right? Maybe you've had this experience when you were younger. You walked an aisle. You said a prayer. You went forward at some revival. Or when the invitation was given, the music was playing, the lights were dimmed. You walked forward in response, doing what the preacher was telling you to do. And you came forward and you said, "I wanna ask Jesus into my heart." And you prayed some prayer. And when you prayed that prayer and maybe they asked you, "Did you mean it when you prayed it? Where you sincere?" And if you're sincere, then their response to you is, "Well don't ever doubt it then. Don't ever doubt it. If you doubt it, it's because Satan is making you doubt." Listen. That is a lie. That is a lie from the pit of hell. Why is it from the pit of hell? Because it is so insidiously deceptive. No one can tell you – no man can give you assurance of your salvation. They can't sit there and honestly say that they know that you're saved or not saved. They don't know. And you know what else? You don't either at that moment. Are you trusting in Christ? The Lord says, if you trust in Him, He will save you. (He) *will in no wise cast (you) out*. He'll forgive you of your sins.

But the process of assurance – having assurance of salvation is something that the Christian has to work through. It's going to take a little bit of time. Assurance of your salvation cannot come from your own heart. "I really believe!" Listen. Your heart is deceptively wicked, wickedly deceitful. *It is deceitful above all things – above all things*. Above the deceits of this world? Yes. Above the deceits of Satan? Yes. Your heart *deceitful above all things*. Assurance of salvation must come from the Spirit of God. God must give it to you. The very nature of Paul's question reveals that assurance is something to be pursued. So listen, if it's something to be pursued, brother, if it's something to be pursued, sister, accept no counterfeits. Don't believe the lies. Go to God's word. Look at the evidences. Look at the tests. Right? Don't believe – don't accept counterfeits. Examine yourself. Test yourself. Peter says, be all the *more diligent to make your calling and election sure* – and the Spirit of God is the one who will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. Amen?

So now, making personal application of Paul's question then, in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5, how do you know that you are truly in the faith? How do you know that Christ Jesus is in you? How do you discern the work of His Spirit? How do we know? The question may be somewhat subjective, but God Himself has given us the objective evidence that we need to answer the question. And the Christian can answer the question definitively. So we are going to briefly consider some of the evidence together this morning. And looking at all of the evidence we could spend months of sermons. We're not going to do that. John wrote an entire epistle devoted to this question. Right? 1 John. We're going to look this morning at the main categories to get you started. We're gonna look at the evidence that we have, given to us by God, for whether or not we are in the faith. We're going to look at the evidence that God has given us for whether or not Jesus Christ is in you.

Let me say three things about this evidence at the outset. Three things. One. God tells us what it is. You're not gonna get it from anywhere else. You're not gonna get it from men. You're not gonna get it from men's opinions. You're not gonna get it anywhere else. You're not gonna get it from this world. God is the one who says, "This is the way that it is." Right? God gives it to us. It's not based on our opinions. It's not based on our thoughts. Not based on our desires. It's not what I think is right. Or what I think I know. The evidence is found in God's revealed word alone. Okay?

Secondly. God gives it. God is the one who gives it. We're looking for evidence of God's work in our hearts. An evidence of His grace. The grace of God comes from Him and if the grace of God from Him is the grace that saves, it will bear His marks upon it. Okay? It comes from Him.

Lastly, God gives it all. God gives it all. The Lord does not renew our mind and leave our heart unchanged. In other words, there are those who all of a sudden converted to right doctrine. Right? They read the Bible. They come up with some new truth they hadn't seen before in the Bible and all of a sudden they believe themselves to be converted. Listen, God does not renew your mind and leave your life in shambles – leave your life unchanged – your heart unchanged. God gives all of these marks to you. All of the evidence will be there. Not in perfection, mind you. Not in perfection. But in direction. Right? We'll have evidence in us of a work of God. The Lord does not change our heart and leave our will unsubdued. Right? Your will will be to turn from sin. Our will, if our will is not conquered then we do not bear the fruit of obedience. We can't expect perfection but if God has saved a person, all of the evidence is going to be there. Okay?

And I cannot stress this point emphatically enough. The faith that saves is given by God. Right? You can see the difference. If the faith that you believe saves is somehow generated entirely within you, then it could look however you want it to look. It can be whatever you think that it should be. If the faith that saves is given by God, it's going to be defined by God. It's going to look the way that God says it's going to look. It's going to come with the power that God endues it with. Right? It's going to come with the marks that God gives it. It is authored by God. It is finished by God. It is not produced by the natural man, nor can it be. So the question is, has God done this work in me? If you consider that the faith that saves – that that faith is produced by, given by God, then it keeps you from being deceived. Doesn't it? You're not deceived by a faith of your own making, a spurious faith. You're looking for a faith that saves. You're looking for the faith that God produces, that God authors, that God gives. Keeps you from relying on foolish or uncertain evidence like your sincerity. That's foolish. That will cause difficulty for you. Right?

Let's briefly look now at evidence in four main categories, evidence in four main categories. Evidence in your mind, emotion, will, and actions. Evidence in your mind, emotions, will and actions.

1. Change of Mind

First, has there been a change of mind? Has your mind been renewed? Has your thinking changed? It deals with what you believe and how you think. Now the first part of this, the first part of this – this evidence in the mind, is a doctrinal test. What is it that you believe? We are to believe a certain set of facts. Right? Not just any belief about God will do. You can't just believe anything you want about God. God has prescribed for us what we are to believe. Right? There are not many paths up the mountain to God. That is a lie. There is one *name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved*. That is Jesus Christ alone. Right? There are certain facts that we must believe. The Bible specifically tells us that we have been delivered to *the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*. Okay? There is a body of truth that we've been delivered to. That revealed truth we must wholeheartedly agree with and embrace.

Now let me give you an example of biblical doctrine that you must believe in order to be saved. First, salvation is by grace alone. Salvation is by grace alone. Not your *works, lest anyone should boast*. Galatians chapter 5, verse 4, *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you*

have fallen away from (Christ) – fallen away from grace. What does that mean? It means that you're lost. If you do not believe in salvation by grace alone, *you are severed from Christ.*

Salvation is through faith alone. Salvation is through faith alone. Romans chapter 4, verse 5, *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.* Salvation is through faith alone. You're not trusting in experience. You're not trusting in religion, some religious ritual, some religious act. You're trusting in a Person and that Person is revealed in the Scriptures.

Therefore, thirdly, salvation is through Christ alone. Acts chapter 4, verse 12, *Nor is there salvation in any other – there is salvation in no other – for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 17, *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!* You see? Necessary doctrine. Necessary truth. This is the revealed truth of God. There is one God who exist in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. He is both God and man. One hundred percent God. One hundred percent man. Right? These are essential truths of our faith.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians, back a few pages. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and look there beginning at verse 1 with me. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 1. These are things that we must believe. If you don't believe these things, you're not a Christian. And it's not Christianity, it's something else. It's some aberration. It's some abhorrent cult belief, like Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons, or whatever. Right? It's not the truth. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 1, where Paul says, *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you (now) the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if – Boy! Look at that conditional word – if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.* Now, oftentimes what happens in a person's life – you'll encounter people like this – they believe a certain set of facts, they believe themselves to be a Christian. Years later they're denying some essential fact of the faith and it proves all along that their "believing" – quote, unquote – is in vain. They're not Christian at all. They're not Christian at all because they've denied some essential fact of the faith. This is "holding fast" – *if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.* In other words, the evidence that you are truly saved – the evidence that you have truly received it, and truly stand in it, and are saved by it, is that you continue in it. That you hold fast.

Colossians chapter 1, verse 23 adds, *grounded and steadfast...not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.* Now many would say, "Listen, I was saved when I was a child. And then took no interest in the things of God, lived apart from God as a teenager. As a college student it was even worse. In my twenties it was even worse. And then I came back to the Lord in my thirties. Now I follow Him as an adult." Listen, that's not holding fast. That's not holding fast. You may be saved in your thirties but what it shows is that you were not saved when you were a child. Okay? That's not holding fast. You were *moved away.* You did not remain steadfast, grounded, *not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.* You did not truly receive that which you said you heard. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. I like it better to say it's the doctrine of the preservation of the saints, because God is the one who preserves. Amen?

Listen, follow me in verse 3 now. Paul says, *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, – necessary, essential doctrine to believe, right? – and – verse 4 – that He was buried – in other words, He was dead. He died. He was buried, put in the*

ground and – *He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*, – essential doctrine of the resurrection – *that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present.* Now think about the glorious nature of eyewitness testimony given here in the Scriptures. Right? These were people who were still walking around, breathing, and talking. If this weren't true, somebody would have stood up and said, "Hey, that's not what happened." The Lord was raised from the dead and there were eyewitnesses, many of them, walking around who saw Him, after He was raised. Right?

After that – verse 7 – He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. Paul stakes his own reputation on the line saying, "I saw Him too." Verse 12. Drop down to verse 12. *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?... if there is no resurrection of the dead, – If you don't believe it – then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty...your faith is also empty.* – Slam the coffin shut on Christianity. It is gone. It's undermined. It is no more. Why? If Christ is not raised, then your faith is in vain. – *If Christ is not risen...our preaching is empty...your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up---if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.* Essential doctrine, right? We are to believe these things.

Do you believe what the Bible says about God? There is one God, perfect, holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, who exists in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Do you believe what the Bible says about you? Do you believe what the Bible says about you? You were created in the image of God to bear His image. You were created by God to live heart, soul, mind, and strength for His glory. And you are unholy. God is holy. You are not. By nature you are a sinner and an enemy of God by your wicked works. You're under the righteous wrath of a holy God and condemned to die an eternity in hell.

Do you believe what the Bible says about Jesus Christ? That He is God the Son. He took on flesh, making Himself of no reputation. He took the form of a slave, coming in the likeness of men. Born of a virgin. He humbled Himself. Lived a perfect, sinless life. Became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. There He died to pay the penalty due the sin of all those who would turn to faith in Him. Three days later, raised victoriously from the grave by the power of God. And He ascended bodily into heaven and where He now sits enthroned on high at the right hand of the Majesty.

Do you believe what the Bible says about repentance and faith? That if you will turn from your sin and if you will trust Him alone, entrusting yourself to Him, that you will be forgiven of your sin, saved from sin and the wrath of God through Him. Do you believe that? You cannot rest your hope of eternal life in the imaginations of men. Those that have come along, adding to the Bible. Those that come along today wanting to take away from the Bible. You cannot rest your hope of eternal life on the imaginations, or opinions, or thoughts of men. You cannot rest your hope of eternal life on subjective experience. "Well, this happened to me or that happened to me back then." You cannot rest your eternal life on your own opinions. "I don't like what he says. I like what I think better." Listen. It doesn't matter what you think. It doesn't matter what I think. It only matters what God says. You are not the source of truth, no matter what postmodern world says today. It doesn't come from you. It doesn't come from you. It is revealed here on the pages of Scripture. What you think doesn't matter. What does God think? Right? God has

revealed truth to us. We must believe that truth. We're not to take away from it. We're not to add to it, Joseph Smith and others. We're not to replace the commandments of God with the traditions of men. Has believing that truth changed the way that you see the world? Has it changed the way that you think? Has it renewed your mind? Has it changed your perspective?

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 16, Paul says, *Therefore, from now on – from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh – any longer, right? – Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ – and if Christ is in you, right? – he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* The way that I think has become new. It's a change of mind.

2. Change of Emotion

Secondly, it's a change of emotion. Mind, emotion, will, and action. These four categories. It's a change of emotion. Do you mourn over the sin that you once enjoyed without remorse? Have you mourned over that? Do you mourn over that? Do you come under the weight of conviction due to a sense of shame and guilt over your sin? Do you know that experientially? Do you confess sin? Do you forsake sin? Or – or do you make excuses for it? Do you rationalize it? Do you justify it? Do you hide it? Do you blame someone else for it?

David said, in Psalm 31, verse 9, *My eye wastes away with grief, yes, my soul and my body! For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.* Do you have any understanding of what David is experiencing there? He proclaims in verse 19, *Oh (God), how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!* Do you have any experience of what David is talking about there? Do you know something of that grief over sin? Do you know something of that joy over the goodness and forgiveness of God?

Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ though you have never seen Him? According to 1 Peter chapter 1, *whom having not seen you love – you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.* Is that love – is that joy – has that been a part of your experience? Do you know what Peter is talking about there? There's so much more that could be said. Right?

3. Change of Will

It's a change of mind. It's a change of emotion. Thirdly, it's a change of will. It's a change of will. Have your desires changed? Are you endeavoring to live in accord with those new desires? The genuine Christian is made a new creation. The genuine Christian has a new heart, new desires, a new nature, and a new Spirit within them. It's going to have an impact in your life. It's going to have an impact. Do you have new desires? Do you have a new heart? Do you have a new nature? Is a new Spirit at work within you? Do you desire to live heart, soul, mind, and strength for Him?

Paul says this in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 9. *Therefore – Paul says – we make it our aim – right? It is an intention of our will – whether present or absent – whether in this body or with Him in heaven – to be well pleasing to Him.* That's our aim. Right? That's our ambition. *We make it our aim.* That's an exercise of our will. My hope, my intention, my desire, with all that I am is *to be well pleasing to Him.* That's what Paul is saying there. *For (because) we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one*

may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Do you make it your aim? Is it your life's ambition to live in a way that is pleasing to Him? It's a test. Examine yourselves. Has there been a change of will?

He goes further to say, "Do you desire to see others come to a saving faith in Christ?" Verse 11, *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord* – Right? Knowing, therefore, there's been a change of mind – *Knowing...the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*. Our intention is to see others come to saving faith in Christ.

Do you desire – do you desire to live a godly life? Well, why? Titus chapter 2, verse 11, Because – *the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men* – that grace that comes from God, that brings salvation, that grace – (teaches) *us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts* – that grace teaches that – *we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age*. It's something else entirely if it doesn't teach you that. You may think that you stand in the grace of God. But if the grace of God that you think you stand in doesn't teach that, it's not the grace of God in Christ. The grace in God in Christ teaches us to deny ungodliness, teaches us to deny worldly lusts, teaches us that we should live *soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*. Has your change in desire, has your change of will resulted in a zeal for good works? Are you zealous for good works? The grace of God that brings salvation has as its purpose a people, a prized possession for Himself, that are zealous for good works. It's going to produce that in them.

Do you desire to love and to fellowship with other Christians? 1 John chapter 4, verse 20, *If someone says, "I love God", and (yet) hates his brother, he is a liar*. I like the way the Scripture is pretty clear cut with that. Right? You watch the news and people say, "Well, they manipulate the truth." No, no, no, no. He's a liar. Right? Let's speak plainly. *Someone says, "I love God", and hates his brother*. Listen, he's a liar. *For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also*.

Have your affections for this world been changed? Are you determined to be separate from this world? In the world but not of the world. 1 John chapter 2, verse 15, *Do not love the world or the things (of) the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. *For all that is in the world---the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes...the pride of life---is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*. Do you run in the course of this world? Do you run in the same list of debauched sins that they do? Right? Or, are you running contrary to it?

Has your love and devotion for the Lord Jesus Christ changed? Has it changed? Matthew chapter 10, verse 34, *Do not think* – the Lord says this – *Do not think that I came to bring peace on (the) earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword...I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'* *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me*. – That's devotion – *He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*. – That speaks of unqualified, supreme, unmatched devotion. – *He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me*. – If you do not deny yourself, take the instrument of your own self-execution and follow the Lord Jesus Christ, heart, mind, soul, and strength, you're not worthy to be His disciple. – *He who finds his life will lose it*,

and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. Will find it to eternal life with Him. Right? Have you noticed a change in your devotion to Christ? It's not perfect. It's not going to be perfect. We're not talking about perfection, we're talking about direction. Right? Direction. The direction of your will. The direction of your desires. The direction of your thoughts. The direction of your life.

4. Change of Actions

A change of mind. A change of emotion. A change of will. Lastly, a change of actions. Real test – the real test of new desires or the real test of a changed will, is a change of action. Not merely what you say, not merely how you feel, but how you live your life. The outcome of genuine saving faith is obedience to the faith. The outcome of genuine saving faith is obedience to the faith. Now we're out witnessing and we'll come across someone, talking to them at the door, and some will say, "Yeah, I believe. I believe." Well, do you obey? Do you obey the Lord? "Oh, yeah, yeah. I obey. I obey. I obey." Give us some – what are some examples of some things that the Lord has commanded you to do? "Well, I don't smoke. Uh..." It presupposes that you know what the Lord has called you to obey. You've been delivered to the content of our faith. We are to know the word of God. It bears great importance in your life to know what the commands of God are. We need to go to His word to know it. The outcome of genuine saving faith is obedience to the faith.

1 John chapter 2, verse 3, *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* – Listen. If you do not keep His commandments, you do not know Him. Verse 4 – *He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar* – there it is again. You're lying. "I know Him. But yeah, I don't have any interest in going to church, I have no interest in loving the brothers. I have no interest in reading God's word. I have no interest in evangelism." Listen. You're a liar. You're a liar. – *Whoever keeps His word* – these are foolproof tests. Do you see? Objective evidence for whether or not we are in the faith. All of these things combined are very important. – *Whoever keeps His word* – John says – *truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.* Following the Lord's example.

1 John chapter 3, verse 7. Consider yourself now, consider. *Test yourselves. Examine yourselves.* 1 John chapter 3, verse 7, *Little children, let no one deceive you* – including that enemy you have in your own chest. Right? – *let no one deceive you. He who practices* – makes a practice of – *righteousness is righteous, just as He* – the Lord Jesus Christ – *is righteous.* – He who makes a practice of sin – *is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.* – When you make a practice of sin, you're in a pattern of unrepentant sin, you persist at a pattern of unrepentant sin; that pattern of unrepentant sin has not been broken by saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are living like your father, the devil – *He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* In other words, the Son of God was manifested. He came to put to death sin. To put to death the enmity. He came to do away, to *destroy the works of the devil.*

Whoever – verse 9 – *has been born of God does not* – make a practice of – *sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest:* – made clear – *Whoever does not practice righteousness* – does not obey, does not make a practice of obedience, does not live for the Lord Jesus Christ obeying His commands – *whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.* Pretty clear. Right?

1 John chapter 3, verse 18, *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth...by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.* When we don't simply love in word but we love in deed and in truth.

James chapter 1, beginning in verse 22. Listen. *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* If you believe that you're a Christian because you come to church, you hear good sermons, you may hear good teaching, but you don't go out and live what you hear, live what you learn from His word, your life doesn't show it, doesn't evidence that you've been changed by God; listen, you are deceiving yourself to think that you're a Christian. You're deceiving yourselves. Because, verse 23 – *if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.* A lot of times, that's exactly what happens in churches and sermons. Doesn't it? You come into a church, you listen to a good talk. Right? You come to a church like this, you probably don't even characterize it as a good talk, it's something else. But when you leave the door, you forget all about it. Right? Or you go off and live your life doing whatever you're going to do. Running in the course of this world, running in the course of your own desires, which are not lined up with His desires. That's what that looks like. You go away and forget. You forget what kind of man you are. Now listen, the Christian can have difficulty with remembering. Right? We're neglectful. We tend to forget. That's why we need the Bible. That's why we need God's word. That's why we need good, solid, biblical, hard preaching. Right? We need that.

He observes himself. He goes away. He immediately forgets what kind of man he was. *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, (that) one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, (that) one's religion is useless.* Again, right? Not that you will see perfection in any one of these areas. Not that you'll see perfection, but do you see progress? Do you see progress? Do you see a hearty agreement? Right? A whole-souled, in-line affection for that direction? Right? Not perfection, but direction.

I love this. Proverbs chapter 4, verse 18, *the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.* That's the path of the righteous. Right? The path of the just shines, and the longer they live, it just shines brighter, and shines brighter, and shines brighter; until one day – glorification. And we shine like the stars in heaven. Right? Shines brighter and *brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they don't know what makes them stumble.* They're stumbling around in the dark. There will be evidence in the change of mind, a change of emotion, a change of will, and a change of action.

Back in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5. Paul says, *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – Do you not know? – unless indeed you are disqualified.* Do you not know yourselves? This is a very brief, very representative list of changes, evidences, marks of conversion. Right? But do you not recognize this about yourself? Do you see this work of God's Spirit, this grace of God that teaches us these things? Do you not see an evidence of that in your own heart and mind? Do you not see an evidence of that in your life? Do you not recognize this about you?

If Jesus Christ is in you by virtue of His Spirit, then all of this – all of this, to some degree will be evidenced within you. Not in perfection but you're going to see all of that. Again, God does not change the mind without subduing the will. God does not subdue the will without changing the heart. Right? All

of this is going to be part and parcel with the grace of God that comes to us, teaching us, right? – teaching us. Why is that the case? Is it because you are responsible for working all of this up in your own strength, in your own heart? Are you the one who produces all of this? No. It's because of passages like Philippians chapter 2, verse 13, where the Bible says, *it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*. It's God within you.

One of the tragedies of the modern professing evangelical church today is that they preach a gospel that is devoid of any power. Right? Devoid of power to change a life. Devoid of power to change a person's mind, to change a person's emotions, to change their will, right? – to change their actions. The gospel, that is "another gospel", taught by most professing churches today, is devoid of any power. The gospel that is from God, is power, *the power of God to salvation*. Through that grace, through the work – the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, *it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*. He will make you into what He intends you to be. The faith that saves is a work of Almighty God. Jesus Christ is the author of it and Jesus Christ is the perfecter of it. It will bear His work as evidence upon it. *You will know them, as the Lord says, by their fruits*.

Now this morning as you think through these things, if you recognize this about yourself, then praise God! Right? Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord. It's a work of His grace. That is an amazing testimony of the power of God at work in the gospel, through the Person and work of Christ to save His people. If not – if you sit here this morning and you think to yourself, "I don't have that. I don't recognize any of that." Then He is worthy, infinitely worthy to be praised for the mercy that He has shown you in revealing that to you. Even now – even now He condescends to warn you that you're under His wrath. Even now He stoops in grace and mercy to freely offer you salvation in His Son. Cast off all confidence in your flesh. Cast off all the ensnaring idols and wickedness of this fallen world. Cast off all confidence in worldly or man-centered thoughts about salvation, and trust in Christ alone. Entrust yourself to Him. All that you are to all that He is. Commit yourself to Him now. Don't wait. Don't put it off. Do that right this second. Trust Him. Trust Him alone. Commit yourself to Him.

For others of you this morning, do not be deceived by the deceitfulness of sin. Do not be deceived by your own self-justifying heart. The deceived are ultimately those who do not deal honestly and soberly with the evidence. The Lord has not kept that evidence from you. He gives the evidence in His word. He reveals the evidence so that you may know. The deceived are those who blind themselves to the evidence. The deceived are those who don't deal with the evidence, who don't honestly and soberly consider the evidence. Don't take encouragement from God's offers of grace in the gospel to continue in your sin. You won't find encouragement in the gospel to continue in your sin. Don't believe that through the works of the law, or through your own performance, or by being a good person that somehow you'll earn favor or merit with God. "Somehow it'll turn out okay in the end." It will not. Trust in Christ alone. Hope in Him alone and be saved. Amen?

All praise, honor, and glory to the One who is the author and finisher of our faith. Let's pray. Go before the Lord now and consider these tests. Yourselves examine. Right? Yourselves test. *Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you?* Are you in the faith? Go before the Lord and soberly consider the state of your own soul. If you find that you are not, repent and believe the gospel. If you are, praise the Lord, worship Him and commit yourself anew to following hard after Him and persevering in the faith to the end. Let's pray and when you're done praying, you are dismissed.