

Self-Test

Harmony M.B.C., April 17, 2011

November 5, 2016

Robert P. Myers

2Corinthians 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?

There is a real and dangerous practice in Christianity today. That is the tendency by many to be very unconcerned about the genuine nature of a profession of faith in Christ. There are so many “signs” or “indicators” today that preachers use to make a claim that certain people have trusted Christ. The most famous of these are things like asking people in an audience to raise their hands if they have a concern for their soul. Another is to get people to quote the “sinner’s prayer,” in which the person repeats after a preacher, or reads the sinner’s prayer out of a tract. After these things are done, the preacher declares such people as “saved,” as though going through a ritual makes salvation a reality. We hear testimonies from preachers and self-proclaimed “soul-winners” all the time that they have saved so many dozens or hundreds of people in their lifetime. Most of these counts depend on counting somebody as saved every time they produce one of these signs or indicators.

Now, we can understand the hopefulness that preachers and witnesses have about people really experiencing a work of faith. This zeal looks for any sign in someone witnessed to, as proof that they have met with Christ. But, this zeal is sometimes misplaced and leads to overstating an experience some person may have had. Those who defend this kind of interpretation of the slightest interest in those who are preached to will say that it is giving glory to Christ to make the assumption that the slightest flicker of spiritual interest is proof of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion process. But, if such smallest of interest in a person is proof that God is at work saving such a person, where does that leave Felix, whom the bible says (**Acts 24**) had an interest in listening to Paul preach and communed with him often. Now, we know that Felix was hoping to be bribed by Paul, but the bible says this motive was an “also” motive (v. 26). We are told (v. 25) that when Felix heard Paul preach he trembled. Surely this was a sign that indicated a work of the Spirit that was leading to a salvation experience. And, what about king Agrippa’s experience (**Acts 26**) in which after Paul preached the gospel of Christ to him he said (v. 28) Paul had almost persuaded him to be a Christian. Then, what about those Athenians in **Acts 17**, who, after Paul explained about the resurrection to, the bible says in **Acts 17:32** that they “We will hear thee again of this *matter*.” Certainly these instances must have been the equivalent of raising a hand showing concern for the soul.

Looking at the history of human kind and the millions of such “signs” or “indicators” of a possible work of salvation acted out by them, we must come to the conclusion that millions of people have been somehow affected by a faithful witness; and of these people we have to conclude that many of them went no further than to have had a surge of interest in the amazing truth and the evident power of the message. In fact, isn’t that the very case of those people that Jesus described in His parable of the sower as being what we have called “stony ground hearers”

(Matt. 13:20)?

But, we have to sadly conclude also, that many of these who had some kind of reaction to the gospel message went on their way forgetting what manner of person they were; or they went away maybe assuming they were saved because somebody told them that they were, based on their show of interest or some “sign” or “indicator.”

The message that the Lord has left us from the pen of Paul in our text today addresses this sad condition of people who have had some kind of experience, gone on their way, assumed they were saved, and looked no further than the slim evidence they hold to about having had a little concern for their spiritual condition in times past, and having had that experience hyped into a salvation episode. This is the message we want to consider today. As we look at thoughts this text brings to us, we should hope that the Holy Spirit will show His power in laying our own hearts open to the examination that scripture challenges us with.

I. Let us truly settle in our minds that if Christ is not in us, we are in a rejected condition
“Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

◆ The bible is clear on this: **Romans 8:9-10** “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.”

- As unbelievable as it may seem, there are some so-called Christian religions that do not teach anything at all about the necessity of having Christ in oneself in order to not be rejected of God
- Religion, even so-called Christian religion, can be practiced by people who do not have Christ in them
 - Illustrate: **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. 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.”
 - The folks described by Jesus in these verses are the “fool’s gold” of the spiritual world (explain the striking similarity between the mineral called pyrite [fool’s gold] and actual gold when it is found in ore)

II. We need to examine ourselves to determine whether we really are “in the faith”

- ◆ We all understand the meaning of “examine” but how to do it according to the intent of our text?
- ◆ First, ask yourself what you are looking for in this examination. Answer: evidence that you are “in the faith.”
 - Illustrate: I mentioned that those without Christ indwelling were the fool’s gold in the spiritual world (look at your two flyers and notice how similar the gold nugget and the chunk of pyrite are). We can illustrate how to conduct our own internal investigation about whether we are in the faith by contrasting what a careful examination reveals about

the difference between fool's gold and true gold:

Gold comes in very small flakes or nuggets, shapeless grains and sheets. Pyrite on the other hand is seen in cube, pyritohedron and octahedron shapes (Look at your two leaflets and notice the difference in the two close-up photos; one of gold on the one page and one of pyrite on the other). **Spiritual lesson: the things of true faith have their own form, and the things within an unregenerate soul have theirs.**

- “In the faith” means to have recognized myself a sinner and Jesus Christ as the only Savior
- “In the faith” means that I have recognized that my sin had separated me from God
- “In the faith” means I know that I have trusted Christ and Him alone to take care of my sin debt
- Examining myself as to whether I am in the faith means that I look down inside my own heart and ask whether Jesus Christ really is the Supervisor of my life or not
- Examining myself as to whether I am in the faith means that I look inside my heart and examine whether or not I am looking to Christ to take care of what I am confronted with in my life
- Examining myself as to whether I am in the faith means that I ask myself whether or not I am looking to Christ for principles of guidance for my behavior (go back to the scripture above and look at the phrase “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” If we are guided by the principles of Christ, we will be seeking to do the will of the Father).
- Examining myself for whether I am in the faith means that I ask myself if I am looking to Christ as a mentor regarding how I am to think
 - Pyrites shatters like glass when hit by a hammer, gold does not (rather it will dent and can be reshaped). **Spiritual lesson:** superficial religion comes apart when put under real pressure; the things of faith are malleable and while they will be re-shaped by pressure, they will not shatter. I’ll say more about this when we get to our next point.
 - A closing observation about gold and iron pyrites: out in the real world, iron pyrites and gold are sometimes mixed together in ore. **Spiritual lesson:** all true believers are a combination of spiritual things and carnal things, because we are still human. So, when we begin to examine ourselves, let’s not come to any wrong conclusions because we discover some iron pyrites in ourselves. But, on the other hand, let’s not make the mistake of imagining that fool’s gold is the real thing.
 - Another fact about gold mixed with iron pyrites: less than half of the gold in iron pyrites ore can be extracted and used. The rest is lost. **Spiritual lesson:** we may by the way we handle our Christian lives, **mix** the gold of God with the iron pyrites of a carnal life, but **most of the usefulness of the gold will be useless** because it cannot be separated from the carnality of our lives.

III. Part of the examination must be “proving our own selves”

- ◆ How does this differ from examining our own selves? Both these words imply some kind of examination. But this “prove” has the idea of testing in order to confirm or approve.
 - Illustrate: You plan to buy a car. You see a good looking one in an ad. You go to the car lot and have a close look. You walk all around it, inspect under the hood, examine

the tires, lights, horn, windshield wipers. You examine the interior, the trunk, the undercarriage, all the windows. Everything LOOKS good. You start the engine...it sounds good. You have given it a thorough examination. Are you ready to buy it? NO! What you want to do next is drive it!. So, you take it out on the road, you run it slowly, you run it fast, you steer around curves, brake slow, brake fast, set and unset the cruise control. In other words, you TEST drive it. When you have done that you have PROVEN what kind of car it is. Now, let's translate this into a spiritual experience of proving your own self.

- In test-driving yourself, you will want to test the following things to examine your faith:
 - When a crisis comes, who do you call on?
 - When a time of rejoicing comes, who do you praise?
 - When some wonderful windfall occurs in your life...like getting an unexpected \$1,000, who do you thank after you thank the person who gave it or brought you the news?
 - When you suddenly have some need that is far beyond the ordinary, who do you think of asking to get it for you?
 - When some worldly or carnal attraction is suddenly staring you right in the face and luring you, what is your first thought?
 - When some worldly attraction succeeds in luring you and you fall into temptation, who comes to your mind as the one you have hurt the most by it?
 - How much is your day-to-day behavior like the behavior you show at church?
 - How differently do you act than the lost people around you?
 - How do you feel when you know your heart has not been right while you were at church?
 - How do you feel about intentionally missing church without being prevented or providentially hindered?
 - When you are challenged to make a choice between following some worldly pursuit or serving Christ, which do you choose most of the time?

Conclusion: Every one of us should examine ourselves and prove our own selves whether or not we are in the faith. It's one thing to make a profession of faith, it's another to dare to look down deep inside ourselves and ask the hard question; to put ourselves to the test out in the world by acknowledging what the right behavior is, and then proving that we can behave that way...and that we want to.