

## **Examine This!**

### **The Importance of Getting 2 Corinthians 13:5 Straight**

*2 Corinthians 13:5:*

*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.*

#### **I. The Consequences of Getting this Passage Wrong**

##### **A. Damaging your listener's assurance about having eternal life**

“assurance” -

1. This happens when you apply this verse as a personal challenge to verify one's justification.
  - a. This application is common within Reformed Theology and Lordship Salvation camps.
  - b. Why making this application will damage someone's assurance:
    - (1) It tells them assurance is found by examining their walk.
    - (2) It makes obtaining assurance both difficult and uncommon.
    - (3) It inevitably leads to one of two types of people:
2. God wants all of His children to be assured that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

##### **B. Damaging your listeners confidence in their Christian life**

1. This happens when you apply this verse as a personal challenge to verify one's progress in their sanctification.
  - a. This application is common within the grace oriented camps.
  - b. Why making this application will damage someone's confidence in their Christian life:
    - (1) It tells them that assurance of a successful Christian life is found by examining their walk.
    - (2) It makes obtaining assurance about a successful Christian life difficult.
    - (3) It inevitably leads to one of two types of people.

## II. The General Context of the Corinthian Epistles

- A. The Corinthians were saved
- B. Though saved, the Corinthians had many issues
- C. The underlying problem behind their issues was pride
  - 1. They were “puffed up”.
  - 2. Their being puffed up led them to be divisive.
- D. How Paul addressed the Corinthians
  - 1. He sent Timothy to be with them.
  - 2. He personally addressed them and appealed to them.
    - a. Paul wrote them three letters.
      - (1) A lost letter that addressed specific immorality
      - (2) The first Corinthian letter
      - (3) The second Corinthian letter
    - b. Paul personally appealed to them and showed fatherly concern and gentleness.
    - c. He used irony to gain their attention and to prod their thinking.
      - (1) Understanding irony
        - Defined:
        - Examples:
      - (2) Paul’s usage of the phrase “do you not know”

## III. Walking Through 2 Corinthians 13:3-10

- A. Intermediate context
  - 1. In chapters 8-9 Paul challenges their inconsistency in giving a gift to the Jerusalem saints.
  - 2. In chapters 10-13 Paul affirms his apostolic authority and warns against the false teachers.

## B. Outline for 13:5-10

### Examinations and Expectations (13:5-10)

1. The Corinthians instructions: Yourselves examine and yourselves test (13:5)
  - a. Why the examination? “since you seek a **proof** of Jesus speaking in me.”
  - b. Examine for what?
    - 1) To see if you are in the faith
    - 2) To know if Jesus Christ is in you
    - 3) To know that you are not disqualified
    - 4) To have **proof** of your standing in Christ
2. Paul’s expectations (13:6-10)
  - a. That they will pass the test and know they are in the faith. (context irony)
  - b. That they will then realize that they themselves are his **proof**
    - 1) He has passed the same test
    - 2) He is not disqualified
  - c. That their actions will not be evil (doubting or challenging his authority)
  - d. That their actions will instead be honorable (submitting and even defending his authority)
  - e. That they will repent and be made complete

## C. Observations from 13:1-10

### 13:1-4

A direct warning: “that if I come again, I will not spare.” (vs 2)

They want “a proof of Christ speaking in me . . .” (vs 3)

So I will not spare (I will be firm and pointed), and this will be a proof of my authority in Christ.

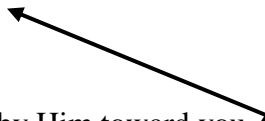
About Christ . . . (vs 4)

Jesus is not weak toward you

Jesus is mighty in you

And we are in Him

And we are empowered by Him toward you



### 13:5-6

“since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me”

The dependent clause from verse 3 semantically serves as a lead in for what comes in vs 5.

“Examine yourselves”

“yourselves” is emphatic, coming first, so could read as “Yourselves examine!”

“examine” - to discover the nature or character of something by testing

“as to whether you are in the faith”

This is what they were to look for. Take the unforced understanding, as to whether you are saved. Are you genuine Christians or not?

*“Test yourselves”*

“yourselves” is again emphatic, coming first, so could read as “Yourselves test!”

“test” - to make a critical examination of something to determine genuineness, put to the test

*“that Christ is in you”*

The unforced reading would take this as salvation, justification – positional.

And the fact that He is indeed in them was just affirmed by Paul in verse 3.

*“Do you not know yourselves”*

“yourselves” is not in the emphatic position here – not the same force as “yourselves know!”

Here it is the object of the verb “know” - do you not recognize this about yourselves?

This is Paul’s use of irony employed to help make his point.

With their tendency to self-inflate, there would be one expected answer

*“unless indeed you are disqualified”*

“disqualified” – Greed adokimos - unqualified, not standing the test

Not passing the test so not being the genuine or real thing

(just like they are accusing Paul regarding apostleship)

Also found in 1 Cor 9:27 - “I myself should become disqualified”

Different context – ministry and reward illustrated by running a race and winning a crown

The context here in 13:5 involves Paul’s use of irony.

Paul’s statement “unless you fail the test” is tongue-in-cheek

Resulting in an intended preposterous suggestion that will nicely demonstrate the

Corinthians’ preposterous behavior in questioning Paul’s apostolic authority.

It is said in full realization that they could not possibly pass the test.

*“but I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified”*

“trust” – to look forward to something in view of the measures one takes to ensure fulfillment – to expect

“that you will know” - Just like how you know you passed the exam and the test and know yourselves . . .

“That we are not disqualified” - just like you are not disqualified.

Paul is expecting them to see that they are his proof.

Quick summary thus far:

Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . examine and test yourselves and see that you are in the faith, and then you will know that we are authentic for you yourselves are our proof.

*“Now I pray to God that you do no evil not that we should appear approved”*

The evil would be to continue with their unfounded questioning of his authority.

*“but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified”*

What is honorable would be to understand his authority as an apostle and stop doubting it.

What is honorable would be to submit to his authority and even defend it.

Defend it because they are made to appear 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”*

If Paul comes to Corinth and all this has been corrected (repentance), then there will be no need for him to be severe in his apostolic power and authority. It is not needed when truth is grasped.

*“And this also we pray, that you may be made complete”*

His prayer is for their spiritual growth and understanding – their well-being, not his vindication.

*“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.”*

I am writing sharply now to alleviate the need to act sharply when with you

#### D. Further Observations

1. This argument is made by Paul elsewhere in this book
  - 2 Corinthians 3:1-3
  - 2 Corinthians 5:11-12
  - 2 Corinthians 10:7
2. Paul is not a self-contradictory teacher
3. How does Paul address the problem of sinning believers elsewhere?

#### IV. Conclusion of what 2 Corinthians 13:5 it is saying and not saying

- A. Examine to determine . . .
  - Calvin Whether you are saved and the answer could go either way
  - Grace If you are progressing in your sanctification and the answer could go either way
  - Irony Whether you are saved but only an affirmative answer will be given
- B. Test to see if Jesus is in you . . .
  - Calvin Proving your justification and the answer could go either way
  - Grace Proving progressive sanctification and the answer could go either way
  - Irony Proving your justification but only an affirmative answer will be given
- C. Unless indeed you are disqualified . . .
  - Calvin From justification and the answer could go either way
  - FGA From proper sanctification and the answer could go either way
  - Irony From justification but only an affirmative answer will be given

#### V. Application – Why it is so important to get his passage straight

- A. Some problems arising with the either of the first two views
  1. They include too much subjectivity
  2. They lead to a focus upon yourself and your sin instead of Jesus Christ

3. They tend to develop two types of people:
4. They can be destructive to your personal assurance in the Lord
5. They can become a hindrance to serving the Lord

B. The need for pastors and Bible teachers to explain this passage well

## **Eight Reasons for Shaken Assurance**

### **Strong Preaching**

Some lack assurance because of being under strong biblical preaching on God's holy standard. Such preaching forces people to see their sinfulness and acknowledge that the holiness of God calls them to a lofty standard of living. Is that bad? No, the pulpit should be the creator of anxious hearts. How else can it unsettle those who have false assurance? However, the consistent call to righteousness may unsettle some Christians, particularly those who are frequently succumbing to temptation.

But that kind of preaching is rare. Churches across our country are filled with smug people who don't feel particularly insecure because nothing in their life is ever confronted. Rather than leading their people to examine themselves and make sure their assurance is valid, many preachers feel it's their duty to make everyone feel good. However, those who preach as they should will find some in their congregation plagued with doubt. Recently I received the following letter:

Dear John, I've been attending Grace church for several years. As a result of a growing conviction in my heart, your preaching, and my seeming powerlessness against the temptations which arise in my heart and which I constantly succumb to, my growing doubts have led me to believe that I'm not saved.

How sad it is, John, for me not to be able to enter in because of the sin which clings to me and from which I long to be free. How bizarre for one who has had advanced biblical training and who teaches in Sunday School with heartfelt conviction! So many times I have determined in my heart to repent, to shake loose my desire to sin, to forsake all for Jesus only to find myself doing the sin I don't want to do and not doing the good I want to do.

After my fiancée and I broke up I memorized Ephesians as part of an all-out effort against sin, only to find myself weaker and more painfully aware of my sinfulness, more prone to sin than ever before, and grabbing cheap thrills to push back the pain of lost love. This occurs mostly in the heart, John, but that's where it counts and that's where we live. I sin because I'm a sinner. I'm like a soldier without armor running across a battlefield getting shot up by fiery darts from the enemy.

I couldn't leave the church if I wanted to. I love the people and I'm enthralled by the gospel of the beautiful Messiah. But I'm a pile of manure on the white marble floor of Christ, a mongrel dog that sneaked in the back door of the King's banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor, and, by being close to Christians who are rich in the blessings of Christ, I get some of the overflow and ask you to pray for me as you think best.

Is the author of that poignant letter a Christian? One thing that jumps out at me is his desire to do right, which sounds more like Paul in Romans 7 than an unbeliever. The pulpit is the creator of anxious hearts, but it is also to give comfort and assurance to those who love Christ.

Editorial comment: But how can this man know he is not an unbeliever? As he examines himself he concludes he is not saved. Why should his doubts be given any comfort? Has the pulpit in the letter given any such comfort and assurance?